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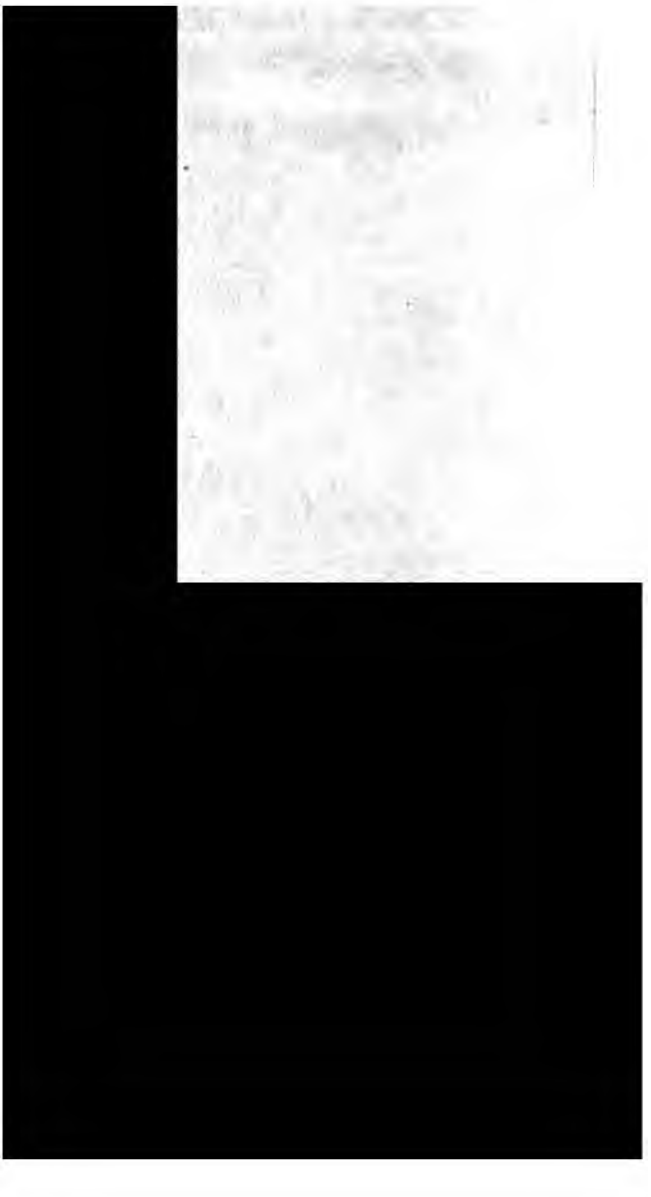

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THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT

ENCOURAGED,

AND DIRECTED IN WHAT MANNER HE MAY APPROACH

The Holy Supper of the Lord,

ACCEPTABLY TO GOD, AND PROFITABLY TO HIMSELF.

IN A SERIES OF LECTURES.

By the Rev. PETER IMMENS,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT MIDDLEBURG, IN THE PROVINCE OF ZEALAND.

Tranſlated

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THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture I.

ON THE NATURE OF FAITH.

ON an occaſion like the preſent, when invited to an attendance on the holy Supper of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, to the end that your approach to that ordinance may contribute to your profit, we propoſe in this, and, if the Lord permit, in ſeveral ſucceeding lectures, to addreſs you on the *nature* and *the bleſſed effects* which flow from true and ſaving faith. In the courſe of the diſcuſſion of theſe, many other truths, connected with them, will be elucidated, we hope in ſo plain, and yet in ſo faithful a manner, that on the one hand the natural man, God bleſſing our endeavours, may be reclaimed from his evil purſuits, and be directed in thoſe paths which lead to happineſs and eternal glory; and on the other, the child of God, amidſt all his fears, doubts, and diſcouragements, may be counſelled and directed, made to increaſe in faith, and wait upon his Father at the Redeemer's table in the experience of great peace and joy in believing.

faith elevated to the Eternal's
aſſiſtance in and wait for his
dertaking. We propoſe,
nature of faith, and inveſtigate
&ts conſiſt.
ieceſſary requiſite, in approach-
ord, ſo we ſhall urge the natu-
all thoſe *means*, which, if ac-
ſſing from on high, will tend to
of that divine principle.
nt out the *grounds* on which a
e aſſured of his being in the

Throughout Scripture, where the term *faith*, and the phraſe *to believe*, occur, both theſe ideas are included. And,

Therefore, ſaving faith implies, "A cordial recep-" tion of the teſtimony of God, and a total and unre-" ſerved ſurrender of the ſoul and all its affections," to God and Chriſt."

Hence faith is a term which no man can fully underſtand, unleſs he hath received and be exerciſed by it.

In the word of God, two particular phraſes are employed to expreſs this act.

The firſt is recorded Pſalm ii. 12, and ſignifies in the original, *to take refuge.*

"Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

A ſimilar expreſſion preſents itſelf, Pſalm xxxvi. 8.

"How excellent is thy loving kindneſs, O God," therefore the children of men *put their truſt* under "the ſhadow of thy wings."

The ſame word is found in other paſſages of Scripture, and always expreſſes the *eſſential* though *weaker* act of faith, to which ſalvation is attached.

The ſecond phraſe which ſcripture employs, ſignifies *to lean, to reſt upon*, or *to ſuffer ourſelves to be borne by another*, as a child, who feels itſelf perfectly ſecure, in the arms of its mother or nurſe. Agreeably to this we read, Songs viii. 5.

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderneſs," leaning upon her beloved?"

See alſo Pſalm lxxxiv. 12. "O Lord of hoſts," bleſſed is the man that *truſteth in thee.*"

Such and ſimilar expreſſions repreſent that more *advanced degree* of faith, which conſiſts in the exerciſe of *confidence.*

In the New-Teſtament, *to believe* is ſometimes uſed

ind the *object* of faith; thus,
declares, that "*he* now *preach-*
h once he deſtroyed." But at
s the act of the mind which is
t to that object, John iii. 36.
a the Son hath everlaſting life;"
is the portion of that perſon
ercifed with reſpect to the *Son*,
.
ow ſpeak, which actually unites
l that we may expreſs ourſelves,
mportance, with the perſpicuity

but remark, that every ſpecies of knowledge is not ſufficient.—A knowledge which is merely ſpeculative is not ſaving. There exiſts a vaſt difference between the knowledge which the natural man has of the truths of religion, and that which *he* poſſeſſes, whoſe ſoul hath been illuminated by the holy Spirit. The knowledge of the former is ſuperficial and external; it ſkims along the ſurface, but dives not deep, to obtain the pith and marrow of truth: that of the latter is penetrating; it extends not barely to the *words*, but to the *matter*. The natural man may be enlightened as to the *head*, but divine truths affect not his *heart*. Is he taught that he is miſerable, he feels not diſtreſs, ſorrow, nor ſhame, at the awful diſcovery.—Are the glories of the Mediator brought to his view in the ſacred oracles, he experiences no deſires after him, at leaſt not ſuch as attracts him to Chriſt. For he hath never yet experimentally known his need of him. But the man who really believes, has his heart ſo affected with the truths of God, that the ſight of ſin and miſery makes his ſoul to feel ſorrow and the keeneſt anguiſh; whilſt a view of Chriſt, as the only way of ſalvation, creates within him holy and ardent deſires to have Jeſus for his eternal portion.

B. The ASSENT of the mind to the truths of revelation neceſſarily precedes the eſſential act of faith.—But let it be remarked, that barely to aſſent to divine truths, as to the letter, is not all that is required: for ſuch an aſſent cannot but be given to them by every ingenuous mind, ſince they perfectly accord with right reaſon, are in every reſpect worthy of God, in their nature tend to advance the happineſs of man, and againſt them the infidel, bold in ſin, raiſes his ſubtil but feeble objections in vain. If thus all within the pale of the reformed church muſt yield an

and the glorious truths which it
e here obſerved, that the aſſent
gives to them, far tranſcends that
external profeſſors: becauſe HE
ore or leſs experiences, the power
upon his heart; he yields a two-
guage is, "I believe them, not
hath made them known in his
they are ſtamped with his autho-
I experience their energy in my
is it is, that the Spirit, abiding
ſies that the Spirit which ſpeaks

that he adapts to himſelf the language of Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 19.

" Surely after that I was turned I repented, and " after I was inſtructed I ſmote upon my thigh, I " was aſhamed, yea even confounded, becauſe I did " bear the reproach of my youth."

It will not be improper in this place juſt to remark, that if the ſinner altogether deſponds of obtaining help by any exertion of his own powers, in a condition ſo deplorable, it is to the end, that thereby he may be prepared;

B. To *behold the Lord Jeſus*, as the mighty Redeemer and Saviour, an object that to the wounded ſpirit, and to the ſoul that feels itſelf deſtitute of all help, is of all others the moſt precious and delightful; for the Spirit diſcovers to him,

a. That *Jeſus*, in order to become a Redeemer, received an *ordination* and *appointment* to his work from his Father, not in time, but before the commencement of all worlds.

b. That he is perfectly qualified to reſcue ſinners from ruin, and become their deliverer, becauſe ſuch is his all-ſufficiency, that he can ſupply every want. *It pleaſed the Father, that in him all fulneſs ſhould dwell*, Col. i. 13.

c. That he is alſo *willing* to beſtow all that *he is*, and all that *he has*, on ſouls oppreſſed beneath an accumulated load of guilt, and filled with ſore diſtreſs at a view of the dread picture which ſin preſents; for the Scriptures abundantly teſtify, that he ſuſtains the mediatorial natures, names, offices, and ſtates, not ſo much on his own, as on account of ſinners who feel the wretchedneſs of their caſe. Yes: ſuch he invites, ſuch he intreats, and ſuch he moſt preſſingly calls to come unto him.

not but produce the higheſt eſteem
, and the moſt ardent deſires after
ccompanied with a ſolicitous look
eſt in his merits; by all which the
faith; for this twofold diſcovery
ld act. Does one contemplate
condition ſo miſerable? he begins
is: " If I continue in my preſent
thing to expect but certain death,
deſtruction; but if I may only be
then I am ſecure of eternal fe-

the people; to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek, i. e. apply for information: and thus expreſſes that frame of mind, whereby a perſon concludes that *ſalvation* is not *in* himſelf, but yet believing that his caſe is not altogether hopeleſs, enquires with anxious ſolicitude after that good way which the goſpel reveals, that he may walk therein.

3. Sometimes the expreſſion *to hearken* occurs, Pſalm xlv. 10. *Hearken, O Daughter, and incline thine ear.* And then it intimates to us, that the perſon acting faith, duly conſiders every propoſition which the Goſpel makes, and liſtens with attention to all that the Eternal ſpeaks in his word: yes, he inclines his ear, and like one whom pain and ſickneſs confines to his bed, he is inquiſitive to learn from his Phyſician, if any, what proſpects appear, indicating a reſtoration from the diſeaſe under which he labours.

4. Sometimes the perſon is ſaid *to lay hold of Chriſt*, Iſai. xxvii. 5. *Or let him lay hold of my ſtrength.* As one in danger of being drowned or burnt, will immediately ſeize the means of preſervation which are at hand, ſo the ſoul, convinced of its being in the moſt imminent danger of everlaſting deſtruction, that he may be reſcued, cleaves faſt hold of Jeſus, the only Saviour of ſinners, embraces him, and will not let him go, without receiving the promiſed bleſſing.

5. Sometimes it is ſet forth by the terms *to be willing*, Pſalm cx. 3. *Thy people ſhall be willing* in the day of thy power; and thus repreſents the ſoul acting faith, as leaving the ſervice of ſin, cordially approving the propoſals of the Goſpel, and chooſing to be ſaved in the way of his appointment.

6. Again, faith is repreſented by a *coming to Chriſt*,

me; and thus it implies, that
on his part makes an offer of
all his fulneſs, the ſoul on its
than it comes to him, and re-
that was its confidence before,

l, a putting of one's truſt in
leſſed are all they that put their
we are taught, that as the man-
ape from the avenger of blood,
haſte to the city of refuge, or
my purſues, runs to the neareſt

the Lord, boldly to engage in his ſervice, and no longer *to halt between two opinions.*

10. Once more, it receives the appellation of *kiſſing the Son,* Pſalm ii. 12. *Kiſs* the Son. As by this kind of ſalutation in former times, particularly in the countries of the eaſt, the ſubject expreſſed his allegiance to his ſovereign, his ſubmiſſion to his authority, and full purpoſe of heart to obey his mandates, the ſoul that believes will own Jeſus to be its king and Lord, his ſervice will be its higheſt pleaſure, and to obey the precepts of his law and goſpel will always be its predominant deſire, its ſupreme delight.

11. But again, this act of faith is eſpecially exhibited to us, by the phraſe *to hunger and thirſt.* Matt. v. 6. Bleſſed are they which do *hunger and thirſt* after righteouſneſs. For it expreſſes the *ſincerity,* the firmneſs, the vigour and perſeverance, with which the believer is exerciſed, and denotes his determination to continue in the uſe of all the appointed means, until he may enjoy Chriſt, and receive out of his fulneſs, thoſe bleſſings which alone can prove the ſatisfying portion of his ſoul.

12. Laſtly, it is called a receiving Chriſt, John i. 12. As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God, even to them that believe on his name. To the end more fully to expreſs the holy ſatisfaction, love and joy, which is experienced by the ſoul, on its becoming intereſted in Chriſt.

All theſe different modes of expreſſion which the word of God records, do indeed exhibit the ſame eſſential act of faith, but at the ſame time they point out the different frames in which a perſon may be, when in the exerciſe of it. But if faith be acted acceptably to God, it muſt be done in ſuch a manner

US COMMUNICANT.

out: and therefore we remark,
ſon betakes himſelf to Jeſus as

CERELY. No manſlayer could
ſtneſs to the city of refuge; no
rpents in the wilderneſs could
gerneſs to the brazen ſerpent;
ſh with hunger, or nigh to pe-
of water to quench his thirſt,
deſire to obtain meat and drink,
ans and flies to Jeſus, beholds
ngers and thirſts after him.

D. He receives Chriſt not for a year, but for years; not for the duration of his temporal exiſtence, but *forever*. A believer will not return to the old Sodom which he hath left; but both in proſperity and in adverſity, in light and in darkneſs, in joy and in ſorrow, in life and in death, in the preſent and in the future world, his ſoul will adhere to Jeſus. Never did the apoſtle more clearly exhibit his confidence of his final perſeverance, or declare the ſentiment which obtains in every believer's heart, than in the 8th chapter of the epiſtle addreſſed to the Romans.

"Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor princi-
"palities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things
"to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other crea-
"ture, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of
"God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord."

Now has a ſoul thus received the Lord Chriſt by faith?

3. The following are the conſequences which reſult from the exerciſe of it. Will it not wholly rely, and altogether depend upon him? Will it not place the fulleſt confidence, both in his power and goodneſs? Will it not feel a joyful perſuaſion and aſſurance of its being intereſted in him. But of this we ſhall ſpeak more at large in the ſequel.

Secondly, We now proceed to conſider what means natural men ought to be found in the uſe of, that with the divine bleſſing, they may be made partakers of this ineſtimable benefit.

But as all who are in a natural eſtate, are not ſituated alike, and their reſpective circumſtances are ſo diſſimilar, it muſt be previouſly ſhewn, who thoſe are who may profit by the means we are about to mention.

1. There are *men*, whoſe ignorance, indifference,

o great, that heaven or hell, ſal-
ſeldom if ever are the ſubjects
nay, who appear ſo like to the
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ıd the lamentations which thoſe

of the *way*, and the peaceful nature of the *path* leading to heaven, or unfold in all their charms the glories of the eternal world, and the pleaſures and joys which believers experience at and after this life, it is not likely that the ſmalleſt impreſſions would be made; for the *objects* which *they ſeek* to obtain, are things below, in preference to things above; things viſible rather than thoſe *not ſeen*—the creature before the *Creator*. Though theſe are fully convinced, that they have never experienced a change of heart, or been converted to God, yet they put off, to a future day, eſpecially if they be in the vigor, pride, and bloom of youth, every anxious thought on that ſubject.

3. Many are ſo overwhelmed and perplexed with the diſtracting cares and employments of the world, that their days and nights are wholly ſpent in labouring and toiling to procure and accumulate riches and wealth for themſelves and children. Men thus ſituated cannot be ſuppoſed to have leiſure to *conſider*, much leſs ſeriouſly to propoſe to themſelves theſe ſolemn queſtions: "What is the preſent *ſtate* and con-"dition of my ſoul," and "what will it then be, when "I come to die?" We fear, if we urged on perſons of this deſcription the uſe of the means which we are about to preſcribe, it would be productive of little or no advantage; for it ſeems they are determined to give themſelves *no* trouble about them.

4. Others again, if exhorted to the exerciſe of faith, and the means be ſet before them, will frame an excuſe of this kind, that the word of God inculcates "That by nature we are incapable of doing any good, "and inclined to all manner of wickedneſs; that faith "is the gift of God; that it is not of him that willeth, "nor of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth "mercy." If ſuch be urged to attend to the things

everlaſting peace, and be pref-
to obtain an intereſt in Chriſt;
with this reply: "it is impoſ-
hough all our powers were ex-
eſſneſs and indifferency enſue.
rmit us ſimply to enquire.—
:laration from a heart which is
ontemplating that your inabi-
ipal part of your miſery? Or
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eity? If the honeſt truth be
:onfeſs the latter to be the caſe.

igs which you muſt PRACTISE,
which you are to WATCH, and
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reached. There ye are not only
t conſtantly excited to ſeek the
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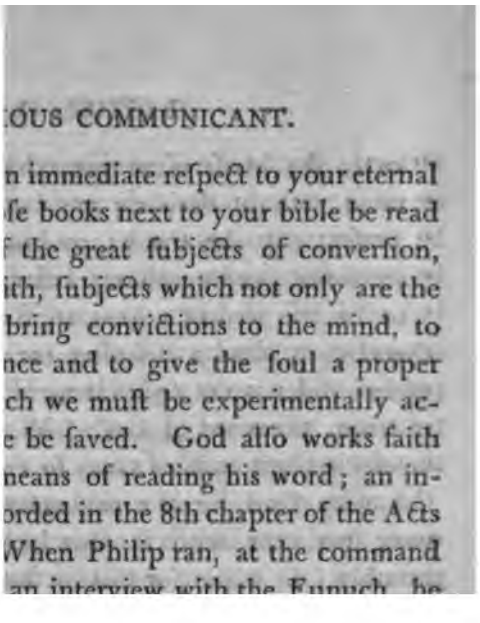
omiſed to bleſs the preaching of
e cannot expreſs how much *they*
ot this appointed mean of grace,

"enter thy houſe of prayer: I have gone thither ſo "often without deriving any benefit, grant that the "preſent may be the happy hour for thee to work: "let ſome word reach my heart, which ſhall prove "to be the ſeed of regeneration." Being ſeated in the church, *lend* a liſtening ear to what is ſpoken; and conſider it not *to be the word of man*, but as it is in truth, the word of God. When the miniſter elevates his heart and his voice to the throne, and wreſtles with God for the converſion of ſinners, unite your petitions with thoſe which he puts up, and humbly ſolicit him for this ineſtimable bleſſing, who hath promiſed ſo often in his word to diſpenſe it, eſpecially to thoſe who enquire of him, to beſtow it. Are *divine* truths explained and applied? Treaſure them in your hearts, you will frequently have ſuch elucidated as are ſuitable to your own caſe. Conſider them not ſo much to be appliçable to others, as to yourſelf. A conduct of this kind may become inſtrumental of producing genuine contrition, and that humility on which the Scriptures ſo abundantly inſiſt. Is divine ſervice ended, and have you returned to your reſpective places of abode? again preſent yourſelves before God, and after this manner addreſs his glorious majeſty: "Lord, I have already ſo long "been lying at the pool of Bethesda, and am equally "miſerable, let thy Holy Spirit cauſe my heart to be "troubled, that I may ſeek to be made whole of "whatſoever I am afflicted. Let this word ſenſibly "affect my heart." Who can tell what a ſovereign God may do, if you obſerve a conduct which is ſo reaſonable in itſelf, and for which you have a divine warrant?

B. *Be engaged as much as in you lies, in ſearching the ſcriptures*, and in the inveſtigation of thoſe doc-



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n immediate reſpect to your eternal
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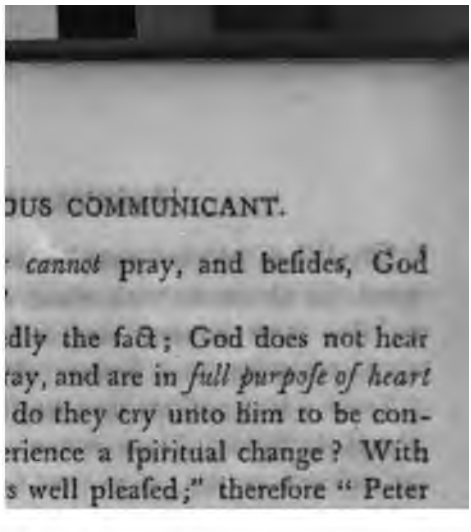
f the great ſubjects of converſion,
ith, ſubjects which not only are the
bring convictions to the mind, to
nce and to give the ſoul a proper
ch we muſt be experimentally ac-
e be ſaved. God alſo works faith
neans of reading his word; an in-
orded in the 8th chapter of the Acts
When Philip ran, at the command
an interview with the Eunuch, he

of God; but at the ſame time remember, that if even in thoſe you diſcern deficiencies, you ought not to be ſtruck with amazement, nor ſuffer your minds to be overtaken by prejudice; reflect that all, even the beſt of God's children have to ſtruggle againſt their inward corruptions, and often to wreſtle with principalities and powers; paſs their failings by, and contemplate rather the graces which they exerciſe, that thereby an holy jealouſy may be excited.

And by the way, we would remark, CHILDREN OF GOD, how neceſſary is it, that in our walk and converſation, we deport ourſelves with tenderneſs, circumſpection and faithfulneſs, that we give no occaſion of offence to natural men. We are a *City* ſet upon a hill; the eyes of all are upon us, and if the world can but diſcover any thing in our conduct which comports not with our profeſſion, they are confirmed in the prejudices which they have formed againſt vital religion; let us then narrowly watch over all our actions, that we be not an obſtacle in the way of any; let us come out boldly for God and his cauſe, and by exhibiting in our lives the ſervice of the Redeemer in all its charms, ſeek to engage others to enliſt under his banners. And if God in his providence, bring in our way any of thoſe whom we have juſt addreſſed, let our ſpeech ſavour of FAITHFULNESS, but not of ſeverity; let us evidence a friendly diſpoſition towards them, and ſatisfy them that our ſouls ſincerely pity them, and that we are inclined to promote, as far as we can, their preſent and future bliſs.

D. But as every mean, without the *bleſſing* of God, will be fruitleſs, we *counſel* you to be much exerciſed in PRAYER. We are aware that you are ready to object, "*I cannot poſſibly* uſe *this mean of grace*, for an



ous communicant.

cannot pray, and beſides, God

dly the fact; God does not hear
ay, and are in *full purpoſe of heart*
do they cry unto him to be con-
rience a ſpiritual change? With
s well pleaſed;" therefore "Peter

B. When you feel your hearts in any reſpect awakened, to cleave to that which is good, and warned to flee from impious and ſinful ways; CHERISH thoſe emotions, and beware of making the leaſt reſiſtance; it is poſſible they may have proceeded from the Holy Spirit. There is cauſe of fearing that many an inſtance occurs, of perſons having been convicted of ſin, who, contrary to the admonitions of their conſciences, have devoted themſelves again to the pleaſures of the world, and ſought with avidity the company of thoſe whoſe minds are altogether abſorbed by the things of time and ſenſe. The effect of ſuch a courſe is truly alarming; all thoſe ſerious impreſſions may thereby be removed, and the ſoul be in the greateſt danger of becoming hardened in iniquity. Beſides, what conduct can be more ſinful? They do deſpite to the ſpirit of grace, and treat his kind and gracious intimations with contempt. Hence he is frequently induced at laſt to withdraw himſelf, and leave them to periſh in their ſins. How dreadful will be the reflections of ſuch in hell! How awful to recollect that at ſuch a time, under ſuch a ſermon, or by ſuch a providence, God knocked at the doors of their hearts, but that they opened not, but launched out into all the pleaſures of the world; and that now it is too late to repent, the day of mercy being paſſed for ever.

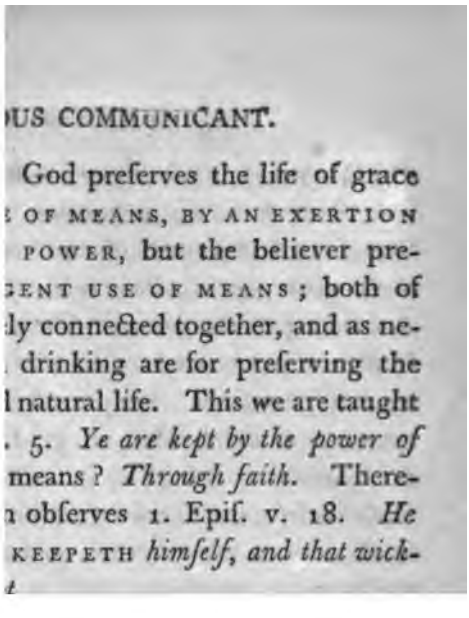
If, ſinners, you would avoid theſe bitter reflections; be perſuaded, when you experience inward excitations to religion, and admonitions to leave the purſuits of vice, to go directly to God in prayer; and when in his preſence earneſtly plead—"That both "may end in the ſaving converſion of your immortal "ſouls."

C. Watch againſt, and by no means give way to

impreſſions which tend to diſ-
: mind to deſpondency, and may
ı on this wiſe :—" My convic-
l ſo long, and I have experien-
han convictions; my ſins are too
n." To embrace ſentiments ſo
ould perſuade you, with a view of
er diſcouraged, and of producing
reſpect to the great intereſts of
ners, ſuffer not ſuch *ſuggeſtions*
ur hearts, for whilſt there is life

rld, and *ſelf-love*, become thine
d—Is not *Chriſt*—Are not *all*
d, the objects of thy *love* and
ath wrought all theſe things in
he beginnings of faith? Give
, and be no more *faithleſs* but

igh to have the firſt principles
in thee lies it behoves thee to
ively exerciſe, and to increaſe
ing grace. To evince this, we



)US COMMUNICANT.

God preſerves the life of grace
: OF MEANS, BY AN EXERTION
POWER, but the believer pre-
:ENT USE OF MEANS; both of
ly connected together, and as ne-
drinking are for preſerving the
l natural life. This we are taught
. 5. *Ye are kept by the power of*
means? *Through faith.* There-
ı obſerves 1. Epiſ. v. 18. *He*
KEEPETH *himſelf, and that wick-*
t

1 John ii. 13, 14. They muſt not always remain BRUISED REEDS; it behoves them to aſpire at the *tallneſs* and *ſturdineſs* of the *cedar* and *oak*. They muſt grow up *as calves before the ſtall*, Matt. iv. 2. According to the promiſe, Pſalm xcii. 14, *Thoſe that be planted in the houſe of the Lord ſhall flouriſh in the courts of our God.* They muſt be like *eagles*, and *renew their ſtrength*, Iſai. xl. 31, like the *horſes in Pharaoh's chariot*, Songs i. 9, and the *goodly horſe of God's majeſty in the day of battle*, Zach. x. 3. They muſt, *giving all diligence, add to their faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs charity.* What are we to infer from all theſe paſſages, if not that the believer is bound to progreſs in the divine life, and proceed from one degree of faith to another? Therefore he muſt

1. Increaſe in knowledge. It is not becoming, that like a *babe*, and *one unſkilful in the word of righteouſneſs*, he continue in the uſe of *milk*, or *the firſt principles of the oracles of God*, Heb. v. 12. It behoves him to go on *to perfection*, and endeavour to attain to a more extenſive knowledge of the myſteries and depths which the ſcriptures record, to the end that he may have more glorious views of the WISDOM OF GOD. In a word, he ought eſpecially to aim at arriving at a clear, diſtinct, and experimental knowledge of the whole *plan of ſalvation; of the mediator* of the covenant in all his excellencies; *of the Spirit* and his *operations;* and *of the obligations* which he is under to the practice of piety.

2. It is incumbent on the believer to *advance* in *yielding a cordial aſſent* to the truth. This he is ſaid to do, *when* by means of an accurate ſpirit of diſcern-

what is *good* or *evil*, *true* or *falſe*;
he *latter*, but approves of the *for-*
encing the *ſweetneſs* and *force* of
the Spirit *witneſſes* that the *Spirit*
meeting with thoſe doctrines which
erious, and which he is unable to
nbraces and *admires* them, becauſe
them.

muſt progreſs CONSTANTLY in
iding-place, and in taking refuge
of his wings; that is, it behoves
on which offers, and under all cir-

enables its poſſeſſor to *maintain* his ground when aſſaulted by temptation, *to rely* upon the divine promiſes, and to *truſt his ſalvation* and all *his concerns* into the hands of his God.

Now whenever the Chriſtian progreſſes in either of theſe reſpects, he may be conſidered as making advances in the *divine life* of faith.

But to the end that he may thus go on, and advance in the *Chriſtian race*, we muſt in the THIRD PLACE, direct to the MEANS which every believer ought to purſue.

1. We cannot preſent to his view, or direct to a more *effectual mean*, in order to his advancement in faith, than the READING, SEARCHING, and HEARING of the word of God. For that ſame *word* which is the SEED of regeneration, is the MILK whereby the Chriſtian grows. By means of it the underſtanding becomes more enlightened, and conſequently the ſphere of his knowledge more enlarged. It is the word of God in the hands of the ſpirit which excites the dull, the ſluggiſh, and inactive heart of the believer *to love* and be charmed with divine truth.

" O then, prize the word, read it again and again " when retired to thy cloſet, and in ſecret with thy " God. It is the *New-Teſtament* of thy Father, in " which thou wilt find thy name written. Whenever " thou meditateſt on the intereſting truths which it " contains, let thy ſoul *delight* in them. Attend to " the duties which it inculcates, and often frequent " thoſe places where its doctrines are publicly taught. " It is impoſſible for the tongue to expreſs the loſs " which thou doſt ſuſtain by reaſon of a frequent and " *unneceſſary* abſtinence from the public ordinances " of religion. By not attending to the truths which " our Bibles record, and by departing from the hear-

OUS COMMUNICANT.

ne/s is brought on the ſoul; whilſt
ſt, and ſuch as we here preſcribe,
en and *confirm* that divine princi-
ath wrought in thy heart. Cleave
l, and let the Scriptures be daily
"

believer's progreſſing in faith, TO
MENTS IN A RIGHT AND BE-
, is particularly advantageous.
ptiſm, the queſtion may be aſked,
to the advancement of faith? for

, that he will make all his promiſes

nother valuable mean of increaſing

Than this there is no duty in the
faith can be more or better exerci-
chriſtian brings before his God, all
ſents at a Throne of Grace, are
ted by and in faith. *Prayer* is the
ife; by earneſt prayer the ſoul holds
communion with God. In the act
and *runs* from itſelf unto God and
into his arms, and *confides* in him

ſpect, and *how far* thou haſt already advanced therein. This, on the *one hand*, would ſerve to produce a ſenſe of ſhame, and cauſe thee to be abaſed to the loweſt degree, upon diſcovering how ſmall thy attainments have been, and at the ſame time excite in thee an holy ardor to make greater progreſs, and to preſs forward in the chriſtian courſe; or if, upon examination, it be found that there exiſts any breach or difference between thee and thy God, in ſuch caſe thou wouldſt be prompted immediately to return to him, which would be attended with the happy effect both of *preventing* thy confidence from being ſhaken, and of *keeping* thee nearer to thy God. But on the other hand, if, by ſuch an inveſtigation, it ſhall appear that thou haſt in any reſpect progreſſed in the life of faith, gratitude would be enkindled in thy ſoul, and thou wouldſt be excited to greater zeal in his ſervice, who hath beſtowed ſuch ineſtimable benefits upon thee.

O, believe it to be a truth, that one of the greateſt reaſons why thine attainments have been ſo ſmall is, that thou haſt ſo little concern with reſpect to the ſituation of thine heart, and art ſo great a ſtranger to its various workings, and to what is paſſing within. Beſides, by want of attention to this, thou doſt become in a certain degree eſtranged from the Lord, and what is truly awful, thy graces, which ought conſtantly to be in exerciſe, lie dormant and inactive.

5. ASSOCIATE much with thoſe tender Chriſtians who live near to the Lord; thou wilt derive this great advantage from it, that thy LOVE will be enkindled into a flame, and thy ſoul burn with ardent zeal to engage in all good works. We have not language to expreſs how much mutual and frequent intercourſe among Chriſtians, tends to the increaſe of *knowledge*

nt of faith. Hath one believer
than another? In ſuch caſe *the*
n, and the *knees which are feeble*
: ſoul as it were inſpirited of
me out more boldly in the ſer-
l Redeemer, God.
l, and watch with ſingular care
hinder thy growth and progreſs

r againſt the aſſaults of Satan,
which he ſhoots with a view of
with reſpect to the reality of thy

ing fruit. Seek, therefore, by bringing forth much fruit, to evidence to thyſelf when thus tempted, that thou *abideſt in Chriſt and he in thee.* Luke xv.

B. ARM THYSELF, and be upon the WATCH againſt the WORLD; they often will ſeek to turn thy hope into ridicule, and deride thy religion, eſpecially if thou art oppreſſed with adverſity and overwhelmed with any diſtreſs; their language then will be, "What *we* enjoy is certain; *we* already "poſſeſs that which is good; we have *no bands*, "but all that thou canſt boaſt of is *future*; thou "haſt it only in expectation; it is ideal and ſpecu-"lative. Who can tell whether, after all thy wait-"ing, the expected bleſſing will ever arrive? And "in the mean time thou art plagued all the day long." No perſon can fully conceive in what danger thou art from the world to have thy faith *ſhaken*; even Aſaph himſelf, was beginning to doubt and deſpond, when he contemplated the *proſperity* of the *wicked*, and ſaw the *righteous* and the *godly* filled with ſore *diſtreſs*, and borne down beneath the preſſure of ſome heavy load. He ſaid, Pſalm lxxiii. 13. *Verily, I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.* But believer, be not ſatisfied with an external view of the ſtate and condition of the children of God; with Aſaph *enter into the ſanctuary of the Lord*, to underſtand the different end of the *wicked*, and of *thoſe who fear the Lord*, that thereby thou mayeſt learn to deſpiſe and become ſuperior to the contempt of the world, and the deriſion with which its votaries treat thee.

7. Laſtly, endeavour *to exerciſe faith daily.* Often look unto the Lord Jeſus, and ſeek to obtain faith's views of his fulneſs; reflect frequently on thy deficiencies and imperfections, and conſtantly flee from thyſelf and run to embrace him, as the fountain from

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

ſtreams of ſalvation. Purſuing a
e, thou wilt find thy faith to *grow*,
e CONFIRMED, ſtrengthened and

aid before you the nature of faith,
neans by which it both may be *ob-*
l by the divine bleſſing; let us now
o improve what has been ſpoken.
tuation, IGNORANT AND UNCON-
? Thou art about TO APPROACH
Lord, but haſt never examined
hou haſt faith or any intereſt in

different from what thou doſt at preſent; then, not the world, but Chriſt would be the object of thy choice, and whom thou wouldſt delight to ſerve.

3. There are others WHO HAVE NEVER TIME TO ENTER UPON AN EXAMINATION WHETHER THEY ARE IN THE FAITH OR NOT. They are ſo deeply immerſed in the cares and employments of a temporal nature, and ſo anxiouſly concerned what they ſhall eat, what they ſhall drink, and how they ſhall come through the world, that whether *alone* or in company theſe things abſorb their mind and engroſs their whole attention.

Whoever thou art whoſe character correſponds with the above deſcription, thou art truly to be pitied. To gratify thee, it might be wiſhed that thou hadſt a larger portion on earth; but canſt thou, with all thy labour, toil, anxiety, increaſe thy ſubſtance, if the Eternal bleſs not the work of thy hands? Beſides, art thou acting a part which is reaſonable, to be for ever concerned for the body, whilſt thy ſoul is in a ſituation infinitely more wretched and deplorable, as long as it is out of Chriſt, and without faith? Thy body will ſoon crumble into duſt and become the prey of worms, but thy ſoul will exiſt throughout all eternity. O! that this conſideration might affect thy heart, and be a mean in the hand of God to awaken thee to be duly concerned for its welfare.

4. There are others again who are convinced THAT THEY ARE STILL DESTITUTE OF FAITH, who are aware that they have no intereſt in Jeſus; who, although at times they may ſecretly wiſh it were the caſe, yet do nothing but wiſh, and SUFFER the world and ſin to reign over them, and lead them captives at their pleaſure, and by thus acting become more remote from *the way* which leads the ſoul to

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rnal happineſs. What *ſituation* can
! What condition more wretched!
idual of this deſcription that now
l and advice in his caſe? Does he
to that moſt important of all queſ-
do to become a partaker of faith?

have this truth deeply impreſſed
to live and to die without faith in
hee moſt wretched, and will accu-
uch a load of miſery as thou muſt

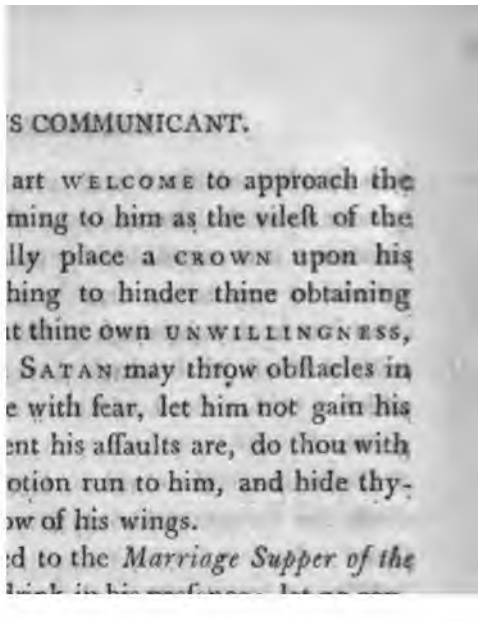
common convictions and awakenings of thy conſcience, *quench* them not; let them make a due impreſſion; it is impoſſible for thee to tell how very injurious it may be to thee to reſiſt them. Is it not from hence that *hardneſs of heart*, and a *total inſenſibility* proceed, than which there is no ſituation into which a perſon can come that is more awful or dangerous?

But where is the child of God? We cannot conclude this lecture without dropping a few words to thee.

Wherefore art THOU always ſo troubled, diſquieted and diſtreſſed, eſpecially about that time when the Lord's Supper is to be adminiſtered? Thou art filled with fear leſt thy faith be not genuine, and becauſe thou findeſt ſo many corruptions yet remaining; thou art ſaying, "If I were really a perſon who had faith, "my heart would have been more purified, and I "ſhould have lived more tenderly before God." But let not thy *heart be troubled*, thou haſt great reaſon to be encouraged.

1. Has Satan, ſin, and the fleſh, in thine opinion, gained a victory? Grant it. Art thou ſaying, "yes, "ſo ſinful am I, and more ſo than I am able to de-"ſcribe." Grant it. Is not thy Redeemer mighty? Can power be wanting in thy Jeſus to help thee and reſcue thee from theſe thine enemies?

2. Conſider what a free offer of grace and ſalvation is made unto ſinners in the goſpel; this, certainly, ſhould remove every fear, and ought to baniſh from thy mind every deſponding thought; for, does not that precious word aſſure thee, that however *unworthy* thou mayeſt be, and however *abominable* thou mayeſt appear in thine own eyes, from the view thou haſt gotten of the holy nature of thy God, and of the



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otion run to him, and hide thy-
ow of his wings.
d to the *Marriage Supper of the*

Chriſt, but at the ſame time haſt made but little progreſs in the divine life, inſomuch that when corruptions ariſe with their wonted ſtrength, thy confidence is diminiſhed and thy fears increaſed. *Nothing* that has been ſaid was meant to diſcourage thee; the conſideration of the ſmall progreſs which thou haſt made ought, indeed, to humble thee; but at the ſame time it ſhould ſerve as a powerful motive to excite thee with lively faith to go to thy God again. Make, then, all thy complaints known to him; tell him how great a burden ſin is to thee, and how deſirous thou art to be freed from it; of anew *take refuge* in the wounds of Jeſus, and ſeek reconciliation in his blood, which thou art particularly called upon to do in approaching the table of the Lord. Go to that ordinance, having thine heart exerciſed by faith, and fully purpoſing, through grace TO RENOUNCE SELF, the WORLD, and ALL that is oppoſed to God and godlineſs, and to LIVE more devoted to the ſervice of thy God and Saviour; then wilt thou be welcomed by the great Maſter of the Feaſt, and in thine experience find THE SACRAMENT to be attended with a bleſſing to thy ſoul; which, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt.

AMEN.

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PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture II.

ON THE GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TEMPORARY AND A TRUE AND SAVING FAITH.

HAVING in the preceding Lecture treated of the NATURE of saving faith, we conceived it would be highly ſerviceable to addreſs you at this time on the great and eſſential difference which exiſts between *that faith* which actually unites the ſoul with Chriſt, and thus leads to ſalvation, and *that* which we are accuſtomed to denominate *temporary*, which indeed ALMOST Chriſtians may exerciſe, but which, however near a reſemblance it may bear to it, yet is as far from it as *heaven* is from *earth*, and as *different* as are life and death, light and darkneſs. We were particularly induced to diſcuſs this ſubject with a view, *on the one hand*, to diſcover to the *preſumptuous* and the *ſecure ſinner* before it be for ever too late, the danger to which he is expoſed of being *deceived*, and to be inſtrumental in leading him from the devious paths of ſin and deluſion into thoſe which terminate in his

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eſs; and alſo, on the other hand,
nfort, ſupport, and grounds of en-
e people of God, who ſo frequent-
y fear, and filled with ſore diſtreſs,
i they exerciſe be not true, real and

our deſign, we ſhall attempt
to aſcertain with preciſion, whether
porary or true believer, is a work
ſſary, and at the ſame time *moſt ar-*

hen offer ſome obſervations on the

1. It is MOST NECESSARY, for

A. It is a point on which greatly depends both *life* and *death*, *ſalvation* and *damnation*, *everlaſting happineſs* and *eternal miſery*; for a temporary faith, how far ſoever it may go, can go no farther than to make a perſon AN ALMOST Chriſtian, and conſequently not a Chriſtian INDEED; for faith which is temporary does not bring the ſoul to enjoy *fellowſhip* with Chriſt, but genuine faith, how weak ſoever it may be, *unites* the ſoul with the Lord Jeſus, and thus conſtitutes one really a Chriſtian, and makes him as an heir, to expect on the beſt foundation, to be put in poſſeſſion of the INHERITANCE which is held in reverſion; ETERNAL LIFE and SALVATION.

B. *Temporary Faith* in many points greatly reſembles that faith which is *true* and *ſaving*; wherefore, the perſon who has only a faith which is temporary, is with extreme difficulty convinced that he wants that genuine kind which *purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, and is the gift of God.* The *ſinner* who is openly profane, whoſe life and converſation is diametrically oppoſed to the law of God, may be convinced with much leſs difficulty that he needs *converſion* than the *almoſt Chriſtian*; for the man bold in ſin, cannot reſort for ſhelter to this ſource: "That he is externally holy, and that in his "whole deportment the ſtricteſt attention has been "paid to moral duties." This, however, is the covert beneath which the *almoſt Chriſtian* would ſcreen himſelf; and ſuch is his preſumption, that if diveſted of one FIG LEAF he will have recourſe to another to hide him not only from his *God*, but from *himſelf*. If, with preciſion and accuracy we would aſcertain the true ſtate and condition in which we are, a very *nice* and *particular* ASSAY muſt be made. The

nds it not neceſſary to bring LEAD,
the touchſtone, for theſe metals
ght what their properties are; but
l other METALS are melted into a
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n proper to apply it to the STONE,
the compound may be diſcovered,
revented. In the very ſame manner
reſpect to temporary faith, that it
om true and ſaving faith, to which
riking likeneſs; it muſt be brought

ly and deliberately *enter within*, look at the heart, and ſee how things are *there* ſituated; for the *heart* is the *fountain* from whence all our actions proceed; hence it is denominated *ſelf-examination* and the *conſideration of* ONE'S WAY; Hagg. i. 5. *conſider your ways*; and becauſe this cloſe examination of the heart is ſo abſolutely neceſſary, the work is rendered ſo difficult; for on the one hand the *temporary* believer does not readily enter upon it, and in caſe he does, he runs through it with all poſſible ſpeed; he does not *pry* into the *ſecret receſſes* of his heart; his *external* actions only paſs in review before him; and on the other hand, though the true believer engages much in ſelf-examination in ſecret before his God, and delights to converſe with his ſoul, yet he frequently meets with ſo much oppoſition that he makes but little progreſs.

B. The work of ſelf-examination is difficult; for the temporary believer *only* ſurveying the *ſurface*, comes to a *good* concluſion with reſpect to his ſtate, whilſt the real Chriſtian, experiencing ſo much of the PLAGUES of his heart, or in-dwelling ſin, forms an opinion of his condition which is moſt unfavourable. The *one*, deluded by ſelf-love, forces himſelf to believe that he is truly good, to prevent his ſoul from being overwhelmed and diſquieted within him; the other, afraid leſt he ſhould deceive himſelf, deals with too much ſeverity in judging of his caſe.

C. There is required in ſelf-examination, in order that we may form a judgment which ſhall be according to truth; that we be aided by THE ILLUMINATING INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The temporary believer, deſtitute of this faithful guide, will be led too eaſily to conclude, that *he is a poſſeſſor* of that faith, *the end* of which is *the ſalvation*

the real Chriſtian, who has indeed
ılightening grace, and thereby at-
vledge of himſelf, having by ſin
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building on Chriſt, the only ſure foundation. *And on the contrary*, although the adverſary be aware, that he cannot *keep out of heaven* one ſoul that has true faith; yet being the ſworn enemy of the people of God, he endeavours to make the *road* leading thither both *thorny* and *difficult*, and eſpecially becauſe much of their comfort depends on frequent and faithful examinations of their hearts. He exerts himſelf to the utmoſt, to prevent thoſe in diſtreſs from entering upon it at all: and if they commence it, he excites ſuch a degree of fear, that frequently they progreſs not, and are impeded in the important work.

E. It is a thing than which nothing is more arduous, to diſcover a temporary believer *to himſelf:* for he is inceſſantly reflecting on his external actions, as being pre-eminent, and ſets the higheſt value upon them, becauſe he is little concerned as to the manner of their being performed, to render them *acceptable* unto that God, who ſeeth *not as man* ſeeth, and *who is a ſearcher of the heart, and a trier of the reins of the children of men.* It is no uncommon thing for a perſon of this deſcription thus to reaſon with himſelf: "I do all thoſe things which are performed by *thoſe* "of whom the leaſt doubt cannot be entertained but "that they are God's children. With earneſtneſs "and zeal I engage in the ſervice of God. I aſ- "ſociate with the pious; and when in their company "make it a point to converſe on the great doctrines "of Chriſtianity, and that too with ſuch fervor and "engagedneſs, that they claſs me among thoſe who "have felt the power of them on their hearts. I ne- "ver indulge myſelf in the commiſſion of outward "acts of ſin. *What lack I yet?*" Matt. xix. 20. Now ſince he builds his hopes of ſalvation on ſuch foundations, and never looks into his heart at all, either

lives of his actions, or whether they
hat God can be pleaſed with them;
is difficult in the extreme to *con-*
rror, and *diveſt* him of that pride
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liever, although his conduct out-
ſpond with his profeſſion, and be
viewing it with a ſcrutinizing eye,
be *good;* yet becauſe he is aſſured
at wearing the external garb of
not conſtitute a perſon a Chriſtian
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xiv. 5, compared with verſe 20, 21, where Chriſt ſpeaks of it under the idea of SEED *that was ſown on ſtony ground.* For a ſeaſon it indeed grew rapidly; but becauſe it had no *depth* of earth, it took not root, and thus by the intenſe heat of the ſun, *withered away.* It is called temporary faith, becauſe, agreeably to the idea of Chriſt, and the manner in which he applied the parable, it endured but *for a time*, and withered ſtraightway before the *fire* of perſecution and affliction.

But with equal propriety it may be denominated, as many have done, a FALSE or IDEAL faith. For when Chriſt ſpeaks of it, Matt. xiii. thoſe days were repreſented as approaching, in which men would be called to ſuffer for the truth of the goſpel, and then it would be manifeſt, when once the flame of perſecution was enkindled, whether the *ſeed* had taken *deep root* in the heart, or whether it was only *ſown* on ſtony ground, the corrupt heart of the natural man; and conſequently would not be able to exiſt, yea, muſt periſh in times ſo perilous.

But in thoſe ſeaſons, when the goſpel may be profeſſed, and there be nothing to fear from the *ſword* of the perſecutor, or the *ſneers* and *malevolence* of the infidel; yea, when it is eſteemed even an *honour* boldly to profeſs the religion of Jeſus; then that faith which is *falſe* or *imaginary*, is not always detected. For woful experience hath ſhewn, that many *live*, yea, *die* under a firm perſuaſion that all is well, and are never awakened from their ſlumbers, until they are plunged headlong into the gulf of everlaſting deſpair.

Now that this falſe or imaginary faith, which in many reſpects has a ſtriking analogy to that which is true and ſaving, not only differs from it in NAME,

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

bleſſed Lord teaches us in the 13th
w already referred to. For,
particular reaſon why a temporary
inued not *to grow;* viz. becauſe it
nd which was ſtony. At firſt, ſays
l; but it was unable to ſuſtain the
d therefore *withered.* On the con-
which is compared to ſeed that is
ound, takes root deeply, and will
ie piercing rays of a meridian ſun

ſt directs us to the ſource whence

it into pieces, and burned it in the fire. Jeremiah xxxvi. 21, 24.

2. That there is an eſſential difference between imaginary and ſaving faith, appears alſo from what Paul teaches us, 1 Cor. ii. 3, where he obſerves, that all faith, to whatever height it may attain, even though *it go ſo far as to induce us to give all our goods to the poor*, and our bodies to be burnt, that yet it would profit us nothing, if *that* faith did *not work by love*, and brought forth unto God the real fruits of ſanctification. Hence it is clear, that Paul diſtinguiſhes between one ſpecies of faith which is *dead*, and unaccompanied with the exerciſe of *love;* and another ſpecies which is *lively* and active in bringing forth fruit.

A more particular view of this will be now preſented, in proceeding agreeably to the *third* thing propoſed, to *ſhew*, "in what particularly conſiſts the "*difference between imaginary and ſaving faith.*" To do this with as much perſpicuity as poſſible, we ſhall

1. Make it appear, that *ſaving* and imaginary faith in many reſpects ſtrikingly reſemble each other; yea, that the latter in ſome points of view excels the former: and then

2. Point out its defects, and wherein lies the vaſt difference between it and ſaving faith.

1. A falſe or imaginary faith has in many reſpects an agreement with that which is *ſaving*. For *both* have one and the ſame *foundation* on which their ſuperſtructure is erected: both the one and the other are obtained in a *certain manner:* both have *various acts* by which it is exerciſed: both produce fruits by which it manifeſts itſelf; and both at times are accompanied with joy and gladneſs.

Let us examine each in particular.

one ground and one *foundation*
iz. *God* and *Chriſt*, who by the
ing faithfully adminiſtered, are
he truths which God hath re-
both the true and falſe be-
object of his faith.
nporary believer, " the word is
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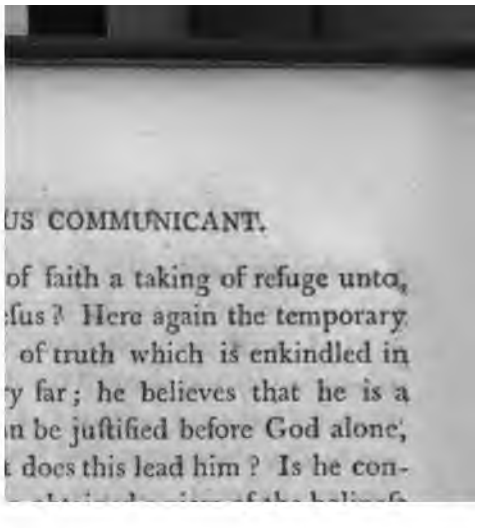
ıg of the word, I have experi-
irit *operating* on my ſoul." For
ıpreſſed with the force of truth,
diſtreſs and painful anxiety of

"of ſociety; and not only ſo, but I ſerve God, and "ſhew a due reſpect to all the duties of religion. "Thoſe who are pious are my companions. The "company of the men of the world I have forſaken, "ſo that I have eſcaped the pollutions of the world."

Aſk now the true believer in what way he was made a partaker of faith; it is frequently the caſe that he will be afraid of ſaying much on this ſubject, but ſtill true faith is always preceded by *convictions*, and it is no uncommon thing that before the believer durſt conclude that he poſſeſſes faith, he is made to experience much diſtreſs, much anguiſh and much terror.

3. They correſpond with each other in reſpect to their ſeveral *acts*; for inſtance,

1. To faith appertains *knowledge*. The temporary believer will be ready to ſay, "I have been taught "the truths which are neceſſary to be known in order "to ſalvation; I know that I am *a miſerable ſinner*; "I know that there is a Jeſus, and that I muſt have "an intereſt in him, if I ſhall be for ever happy; I "know, in a word, that there is no other way of "coming to him but by faith, and that faith muſt "manifeſt itſelf to be genuine, by the fruits which it "produces." Of all theſe truths there are times when he has a very *clear*, exact and diſtinct apprehenſion. Where faith is exerciſed is there an *aſſent* of the mind to divine truths? The temporary believer ſays, with my whole heart I aſſent to them; be it far from me to entertain the ſmalleſt doubt with reſpect to them; nay, I am ready to enter the liſts with all who preſume to expreſs their oppoſition to them, and to evidence that I do in reality believe the doctrines of the bible, I order my walk and converſation after the manner of thoſe who have been changed and renewed, agreeably to and by the truths of the goſpel.



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of faith a taking of refuge unto,
ſus? Here again the temporary
of truth which is enkindled in
y far; he believes that he is a
n be juſtified before God alone;
t does this lead him? Is he con-

out into open acts; this is all the ſtruggle he makes. Again, the temporary believer may, in like manner, progreſs far in a virtuous courſe and appear uncommonly zealous in the performance of religious duties. Now he ſeeks the company of thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed for their piety, and being poſſeſſed of natural talents, he ſpeaks with confidence and in a ſatisfactory manner, not only on ſpeculative points, but on the very eſſentials of religion. Now he appears before the throne, he even excels in prayer, and his expreſſions be ſo correct, and at the ſame time ſo ſolemn and affecting, that hearts the moſt obdurate cannot but feel emotions of tenderneſs and awe. Now with a liberal hand he adminiſters to the wants of the poor; in a word, he may maintain ſtrictneſs of diſcipline in his family; in his converſation and walk he may be moral, peaceable, and be rendered eminent for ſobriety; in his dreſs he may be moderate, and even appear in a garb, in neatneſs and elegance not correſponding with that ſituation in him, in which he is placed in providence, ſo that in all that reſpects externals, one would ſay of him, *he lacketh nothing.*

Examples of this kind are not unfrequent in the word of God. *The fooliſh virgins as well as the wiſe had their lamps, aroſe at the cry, Behold the bridegroom cometh, and ſaid Lord, Lord, open unto us,* Matt. xxv. There will be thoſe at the laſt day, who, anxious to obtain the approving ſentence of their Judge, will not heſitate to exclaim, Lord! Lord! *have we not propheſied in thy name, and in thy name caſt out devils, and done many wonderful works?* notwithſtanding muſt hear the vindictive ſentence of an inſulted Deity, *Depart from me,* Matt. vii. 23.

Paul ſpeaks of thoſe who had been once enlightened, who had taſted of the heavenly gift, of the good

he powers of the world to come,
fell away.
ich we meet with, Iſaiah lviii. 2.
: *They ſought God daily and de-*
s; they did righteouſneſs, forſook
heir God, and took delight in ap-

believer may, equally with the
which is true and ſaving, expe-
he views himſelf as intereſted in
idly imagines that he hath ap-
his benefits to his ſoul: now

The temporary believer may indeed have had convictions, but they were only common, and not produced by the ſpecial influences of the Spirit, for they have left him as they found him; he has never *renounced his own righteouſneſs*, much leſs *entered into covenant with God in Chriſt*. And hence it is that he is ſeldom heard to ſpeak with perſpicuity and preciſion with reſpect to the ſaving operations of the Holy Spirit, manifeſted in the converſion of ſinners, and in *bringing them out of darkneſs into light*, and *from the power of Satan unto God*; for of a real change of heart he is perfectly ignorant. Is he aſked—"*When* wert thou converted to God?—"How didſt thou, who, like others, wert born in ſin, "and a ſtranger to God, come by ſuch a change?" He will take advantage of the different ways, according to which the word declares, God is pleaſed to convert men. "With ſuch a real change," ſays he, "I am altogether unacquainted"—Or, "I have had "from my earlieſt youth a deſire ſo to live," or, "I "have been in a greater or leſs degree, convinced "of the reaſonableneſs of ſuch a courſe; I have "heard and read much of divine truths—I have "prized them, I have admired their harmony, my "ſoul hath delighted in them, and alſo I have en-"deavoured to regulate my life according to them; "now certainly nothing more can be required."

Does the temporary believer reaſon on this wiſe? The real child of God is exerciſed quite in a different manner. Although it be true, that God may have called him from his youth, or gradually brought him to the enjoyment of his fellowſhip, yet he will exhibit evidences of grace—he does not reſt ſatisfied with any former experiences; but will often examine the ſtate of his ſoul by the marks which are laid down

d; and although he may not have
o designate the time or place of
ll he cannot but say—" If I look
ner life, I find that I am now a
om what I then was; then I went
a course of sinning; I followed on
y lusts carried me, but God now
my view my true character; I see
that my heart is deceitful and des-
and on this account I condemn
e I found myself inclined to leave
rvice, but now I experience a cor-

reſpect to the *manner* in which a perſon becomes partaker thereof.

Of this the temporary believer can only ſay, that he attained to by degrees. " I diſcovered," ſays he, " that it was both reaſonable and neceſſary for me to " ſubmit to the goſpel; and in order to procure reſt " in my conſcience, I perſuaded myſelf I really was " in a gracious ſtate. But of the pangs of the new " birth, and of godly ſorrow,—theſe are things with " which I am perfectly unacquainted."

On the contrary, if we aſk the children of God, in what way they were converted, and how they became partakers of faith,—

ONE will reply, *in a mild evangelical manner*, " God drew me with the bands of a man, and with " the cords of love. From the moment I obtained a " knowledge of myſelf, Jeſus and his free and ſo- " vereign grace were manifeſted to me, and inſtantly " I ſurrendered myſelf to God my Saviour, and with " a heart tranſported with the delightful view, I " ſang,

" Hail, ſovereign love, that firſt began
" The ſcheme to reſcue fallen man;
" Hail, matchleſs, free, eternal grace!
" That gave my ſoul an hiding-place."

ANOTHER will anſwer, " In a way ſo replete with " delight, I was not brought over. I have not " words to expreſs the pangs my ſoul experienced, " when it paſſed from death unto life. Language " would fail me, were I to attempt a deſcription of " the horror and anguiſh I felt, of the wretchedneſs " I endured, of the humbling views I had of myſelf, " of the confeſſions I made, and of the tears which " were preſſed from mine eyes, when I obtained a

ſenſe of ſin. How often have
nite upon my thigh, how often
l my face, when appearing be-
n of mine iniquities. Yea, be-
ſo far as to dare to apply Jeſus
eſpect, how ſhall I expreſs the
made after him. I hungered
s righteouſneſs: he became the
my eſteem and love, eſpecially
firſt I got a ſight of him, and
voice utter theſe heart-cheering
me. Viewing him as the chief

attribute of his nature; that *ſin* muſt be avoided; that *hell* is the receptacle which the Eternal has ordained for the finally impenitent; and that *heaven* is the glorious place which Jeſus has prepared for his redeemed: But he is not in the leaſt affected with the diſcovery; and thus reſembles the man who can ſtand gazing on pictures which repreſent objects the moſt terrific, without betraying the leaſt fear or emotion. But when God *by the light of his Spirit*, makes thoſe ſame truths known, then is the ſoul brought as it were to *Mount Sinai*, where it beholds God ſeated as a *judge;* and is compelled to cry out, "*I have* "*heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now* "*mine eye ſeeth thee, and therefore I humble myſelf in* "*duſt and aſhes,*" Job xlii. 5, 6. From what principle proceeds this fear? Is it not the knowledge which it hath obtained of the *greatneſs* and *majeſty* of God? Becauſe the ſoul views God as a being who deſerves all its *love*, and *all poſſible reverence and adoration.* Its language is, "*Who would not fear thee,* "*O King of nations? for unto thee doth it appertain.*"

With reſpect to SELF-KNOWLEDGE in particular, the language of the *true* believer is, "I am aware "of being both *miſerable, wretched, poor, blind, and* "*naked;* not only becauſe God declares it, but be- "cauſe I *experience* it to be true. It hath pleaſed "God to enable me to ſee myſelf as I really am. I "am not only ſenſible that my *actions* are ſinful, but "alſo that my heart is the corrupt fountain from "whence iſſues thoſe ſtreams which pollute and ren- "der my beſt performances to be loathed by that "God, whoſe nature is *perfect holineſs.*"

The temporary believer, on the other hand, believes indeed that he is a ſinner; but at the ſame time can plead in favour of his iniquities. He urges that

f tranſgreſſors; he conceives that
re abandoned than he is; and
g his intentions were none of the
no one living but commits ſin,
nfinitely greater ſinners than he
uch were the ſentiments of the
i. 11, *who ſtood and prayed thus*
thank thee that I am not as other
s, unjuſt, adulterers. While the
ſincerity of his heart, with the
ho *dared not to lift up his eyes*
far off, and ſmote on his breaſt.

who labours under ſome malady. His ſoul will be filled with joy, and an ardent deſire to ſee one ſo celebrated in his profeſſion will be formed within him. "O!" ſays he, "convey me ſtraightway to him, that "I may receive aſſiſtance from him." He cannot be at reſt in his mind, until he have an interview with him, and apply to him for relief. Such is the knowledge of every true believer, that whilſt it illuminates the *head*, it alſo affects the *heart*. His language again is, "I have indeed before now been in ſome "reſpects ſatisfied with Chriſt: but it is only ſince "God has been pleaſed to diſcover to me my awful "ſituation, and my need of him for ſalvation, that I "want words to expreſs how precious he is to my "ſoul in every point of view; in his NAMES, in his "OFFICES, and in his WHOLE PERSON, he is to me "*the chief of ten thouſands*. Is he a *king?* he is pre-"cious; for in this exalted character he will erect "his throne in my heart, ſubdue all my luſts, and "reign over me as a gracious ſovereign. Is he a "*prieſt?* he is precious; for as ſuch he will reconcile "me to God. Is he a *prophet?* he is precious; for "as the teacher who hath come from God, *he will* "*make me wiſe unto ſalvation*. Yes; he is precious "to me, both in his *ſtate of humiliation and of exalta-*"*tion*, and *in his two natures*, the *divine* and *human*. "In a word, he is altogether *lovely*. It is a view of "Jeſus in theſe different lights, that at firſt attracted "me to him, makes me to love him ſtill, and pro-"duces conſtant and ſtrong deſires to hold delightful "intercourſe with him."

Again, a temporary believer has ſome knowledge of the NATURE OF TRUE FAITH. He knows that it conſiſts in the act of *habitually* FLYING TO and RECEIVING OF CHRIST. But this knowledge has

heart. It has never led him to
e Jeſus his refuge, or to accept
ed in the goſpel. He hath ac-
eading the word, or by hearing
ſcribed by the *heralds* of Chriſt.
, although he may be unable to
nition of the peculiar nature of
the Lord, he knows experimen-
iſts. " O!" ſays he, " I well
o *hunger* and *thirſt*, for many
he flame of ardent deſire enkin-

muſt be holy, becauſe *God who hath called him is holy.* He is ſenſible, that in order completely to mortify ſin, he muſt begin with the heart; and that it is a work extremely arduous. Nothing produces in him more ſorrow and diſtreſs, than the reflection that ſins and corruptions ſo much abound: he knows, in a word, that if duties be performed acceptably to God, the heart muſt be purified, and therefore he knows experimentally what it is to hold ſweet converſe with his God, and to call in the ſtrength of Jeſus to his aid, in the diſcharge of every duty.

Laſtly, The knowledge which the temporary believer HAS OF HEAVEN, is vaſtly different from that which the true Chriſtian experiences. The *former* views heaven as *a place of delight and pleaſure,* where there will be for ever a perfect freedom from puniſhment. It is on *this account* he wiſhes to be admitted into it, and not becauſe he will there be perfectly *holy,* and *know* and *enjoy* his God, as his everlaſting portion. But the *latter* contemplating the manſions which Jeſus has prepared for the children of his love, to be places where perfect holineſs reigns,—it is this which induces him to long to be there, to the end that he may ſerve his God, and be fully delivered from all that imperfection and impurity which cleaves to him in the preſent ſtate.

The SECOND *act* of faith is ASSENT. In reſpect to this alſo the temporary believer widely differs from him whoſe faith is true and ſaving. The FORMER aſſents to the TRUTHS which God hath revealed, becauſe *they are worthy of all acceptation,* and *harmonize* in a moſt pleaſing manner. He even aſſents to thoſe which are moſt *experimental,* becauſe he is convinced that they are *abſolutely* neceſſary. However, it is a *mere aſſent;* he is a total ſtranger to any

n upon his heart. But THE
OFOLD ASSENT. He aſſents to
bible, becauſe the *Eternal* has
ated them; and thus *ſets to his*
John iii. 33; and alſo becauſe
xperience, hath realized them.
is *acquaintance* with the *ſtructure*
may give to his patient an ac-
the diſeaſe under which he la-
nt judges to his accuracy in the
vn *experience* correſponding with
So the true believer: his lan-

ling to renounce every thing but Chriſt. He will not take ſin by the hand, nor any longer practiſe it as before. So far from it—he is repeatedly calling in terms the moſt perſuaſive, upon Chriſt to reign in and over him. And becauſe he is oftentimes in doubt, and afraid, leſt he may not have been ſincere, in the act of ſurrendering himſelf to Jeſus, he renews and repeats it on every opportunity.

d. If temporary and ſaving faith ſo eſſentially differ from each other, with reſpect to the *foundation*, the *manner* of obtaining it, and the *acts* by which both are exerciſed; not leſs is the difference with regard to the *fruits* which each reſpectively produce.

The *temporary* believer not only may bring forth *fruit*, but *much* fruit; by which he not only deceives *himſelf* but *others* alſo. That he may be eſteemed and reſpected as a man of piety, he will put on the *maſk* of Chriſtianity at the very ſame time that he *denies*, and is perfectly ignorant of the power of it. This external appearance is extremely fair and pleaſing; but he is rottenneſs within. His *words* and his *manner* beſpeak the *man* of *humility*; but his heart is ſwollen with pride and vanity. He lends the liſtening ear, to hear what others ſay of him; and if he be praiſed by any, his ſoul is *charmed* therewith. He does not *hate ſin conſidered as ſin*; for if his actions at any time be oppoſite to thoſe which are good and pious; if he commit *ſin*—he will be quite unconcerned; provided it can be hidden from the eyes of the world. —If, on the other hand, his actions in particular inſtances be *religious*, and ſuch as become the real Chriſtian—he is anxious that they be *univerſally* known; and like the Phariſees, when they gave alms, —he will ſeek to place them in the faireſt point of light.

The *true* believer on the contrary *brings* forth

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into the real ſtate of his *heart*, for he is always *ſuſpicious* of himſelf, and fearful of being deceived. Hence oftentimes he unboſoms himſelf to his experienced Chriſtian friends.—Yes: he goes to God, and not unfrequently pleads that HE would try *what manner* of ſpirit he was of.

2. The temporary believer can meet with nothing to which he is more *averſe*, than *to be* brought to a diſcovery of *his real ſituation before God*; and therefore when under ſermon, or in company with perſons who are truly pious, he hears deſcribed the ſlender foundations on which hypocrites build, and has delineated, their true character; he ſays to himſelf, becauſe conſcience, the faithful monitor which is within, ſuggeſts it—"*All that has been ſpoken* was "intended for me—it was *ſuitable to my caſe.*" Hence anger is retained in his heart, and ſecret malice in his boſom. But on the contrary—the true believer ſeeks after ſuch miniſters *as deſire to be found faithful*, chooſes for his companions thoſe *honeſt* Chriſtians who will deal *plainly* with him; and with his heart elevated to the throne, addreſſes his Saviour and his God—*Let the righteous ſmite me, it ſhall be a kindneſs, and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent oil.* Pſalm cxli. 4.

3. The temporary believer cannot endure to be reprehended with reſpect to *his walk and converſation*, even though the reproof be in *love*, and delivered in terms the moſt tender and moderate. He will form excuſes for any deficiencies which may have been ſuggeſted to him, and is careful to avoid thoſe who, acting like men, dare to be faithful to *his ſoul* and to *their* God.

The true believer delights in nothing ſo much as to have preſented full in his view, thoſe failings of

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ance of being of a pious nature, he will lay hold of it, and continue to think himſelf *ſecure* of *Heaven.*

But the true believer is eaſily alarmed; though on the review of his life he diſcovers that he has done much good, yet if he recollects but one ſin, which had and ſtill continues to have the maſtery over him, he will be inſtantly led to enquire, "Is this conſiſtent with grace." Diſtreſs enſues.

6. The temporary believer always continues in the *ſelf-ſame* ſituation; he knows not what it is *to ſit in darkneſs*, and is a ſtranger to the enjoyment of *true Spiritual light*; whether he commit ſin, or whether he perform duties, he is alike ſatisfied that all *is* well, and that all will *end* well.

On the contrary, the experiences and the frames of the true believer are *many* and *very unlike*; he has been taught what it is to *ſee* no *light*, and *walk in the light of the Lord.* Does God conceal his face from him? Does he experience deadneſs in his ſoul? Does his heart cleave to the duſt? The frame of the believer under ſuch circumſtances, is diſtreſſing; *no ſorrow is then like unto his ſorrow.* But again; does he enjoy the light of *Jehovah's countenance*? Is his ſoul awakened, quickened? Then *joy* and *delight* reign within.

Thus, with as much clearneſs and preciſion as poſſible have we attempted to diſcuſs a ſubject, than which no one can be more intereſting, no one more important.

Let us now in the FOURTH place proceed, as was propoſed, to give ſome advice and direction to thoſe unhappy and miſerable men, who are likely to be deluded into hell by an ideal faith; or who, by means of this diſcourſe, may have been made to experience diſtreſs, and to enquire, *men and brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?*

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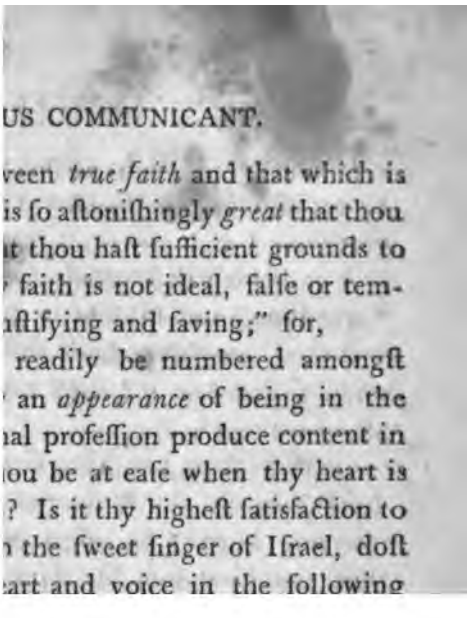
4. Are any of you awakened, and convinced of the neceſſity of experiencing the power of religion on your ſouls? and are made ſenſible of your having never as yet felt that power? Seek to keep alive religious impreſſions of this kind, and go with them unto your God; confeſs before him the folly of your paſt conduct, and ſay, "Lord! I have lived ſufficiently "long without having any experimental acquaintance "with thee; already too long have I been dealing de- "ceitfully with myſelf, and acted an unfaithful part "towards thee; I am aſhamed of a conduct ſo un- "wiſe; bring thou me into the right way before it be "for ever too late; cauſe thou me not only to *appear* "to fly to Chriſt, but *in reality* to embrace him as "my Saviour and Redeemer, God." Who can tell but by dealing in ſuch a faithful manner with yourſelves, God will look upon you in mercy! He is a *compaſſionate* and gracious God.

THE LAST THING PROPOSED was, to *endeavour* to ANIMATE and ENCOURAGE the AFFLICTED and DEJECTED CHILD of God, eſpecially with reſpect to their approach to the table of the Lord.

Here, perhaps, the ſoul that is overwhelmed with diſtreſs, having heard with attention what we have advanced on the ſubject which we have attempted in the fear of the Lord to diſcuſs, will be ready to ſay, "Is "ſuch a ſubject calculated in any manner to raiſe the "*ſinking* and *depreſſed* ſpirit of a child of God; it "cannot be otherwiſe but a topic of this kind muſt "produce more diſtreſs, and a greater degree of diſ- "quietude; for my daily *concern* and *fear* is, that I am "no more than a poſſeſſor of a *temporary faith*."

We make thee this reply: "If thou haſt ſtrictly at- "tended to every thing which we have advanced, "then thou wilt be compelled to acknowledge that



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even until IT ſhall be changed into ſight, and THY HOPE into the FULL FRUITION of THY *Jeſus* in glory.

YES, thou wilt be ready to ſay, "*To anſwer* theſe "queſtions, and *to come* to ſuch a comfortable con-"cluſion, are things moſt difficult."—But O! thou *whoſe ſoul art* so *diſquieted within thee*, ſuffer us to aſk thee:

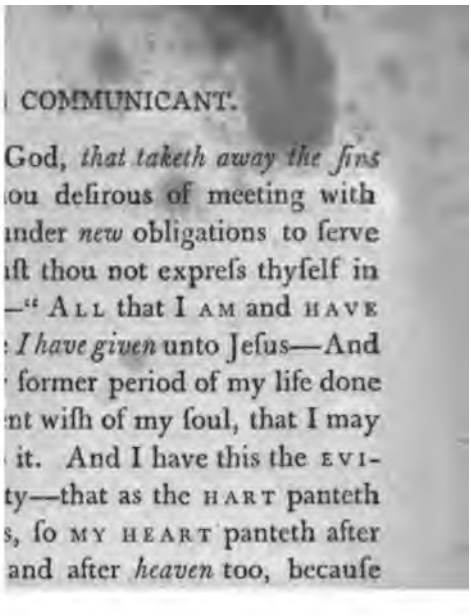
1. Wilt thou not have *God* for *thy God*, and *the Lord Jeſus* for thy Redeemer? Art thou *oppoſed* to receiving him as he offers himſelf to thee? Wilt thou not have him for thine ALL AND IN ALL? Wilt thou make an exception with reſpect to any thing whatever? Is not all that is IN HIM *altogether* lovely and precious in thy view?

2. Doſt thou not wiſh to give him thine *whole heart*, that he may wholly *poſſeſs* it, *reign* and *rule* over it?

3. When thou revieweſt thy life, and diſcovereſt that thou haſt brought forth but *little fruit*, is thy ſoul at eaſe? Or is it not filled rather with ſore diſtreſs at the contemplation of thine ingratitude?—Would not thine heart rejoice, if *ſin* were more and more *mortified*, and if *the image of* God beamed forth with more refulgent brightneſs in thy walk and in thy life?

4. Doſt thou not therefore fly to Jeſus, that thou mighteſt *in and by* him be made *fruitful?* Is it not the language of thy ſoul—Would to God that *Jeſus were made unto me* SANCTIFICATION as well as *wiſdom* and righteouſneſs. And,

5. Is it not on this account that thou haſt ſo frequently longed for the approach of that day when thou ſhalt again be invited to appear at the table of the Lord, with a view of meeting with thine *all-ſufficient* and thy *precious* Redeemer, who under the *emblems of bread and wine*, is *there* ſet forth *crucified* and ſlain,



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Lecture III.

THE ASSURANCE OF CHRISTIANS, A FRUIT OF SAVING FAITH.

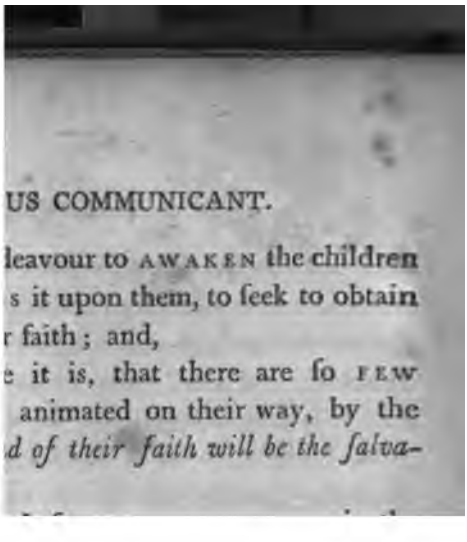
HAVING, in the preceding diſcourſes, addreſſed you on the nature of faith, and ſhewn wherein conſiſts the great difference between that which is true and ſaving, and that which is falſe and deluſory; we now proceed to conſider and inveſtigate the ſentiments, which the word records, on the intereſting doctrine of the *aſſurance of faith.*

That we may expreſs ourſelves on a ſubject of ſuch importance, with the preciſion and perſpicuity it merits, we muſt,

I. Shew that aſſurance is not the ESSENCE of faith, but the fruit of it; and endeavour to make it appear.

II. That the Chriſtian MAY attain to the aſſurance of faith; and that it is a DUTY which is peculiarly obligatory upon him to aſpire after it: then,

III. We ſhall point out the NATURE of aſſurance, or wherein it actually conſiſts. After which,



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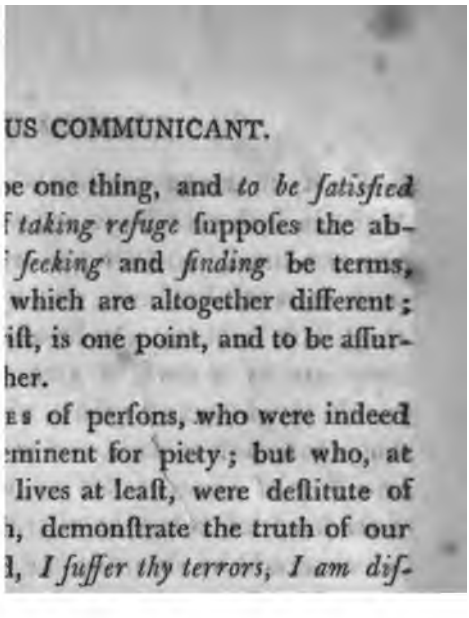
obtained; in the ſecond epiſtle of Paul to Timothy, chap. i. 12. that inſpired apoſtle ſays, *I know in whom I have believed*: hence it appears that he had FIRST believed, and that AFTERWARDS he was aſſured of it. It is ſaid, Rom. i. 17. we muſt *go from faith to faith*, namely, from a WEAK to a STRONG faith. John ſays, in his firſt epiſtle, chap. v. 13 ver. *Theſe things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* Here a diſtinction is made between KNOWING and BELIEVING. In like manner, the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 22. exhorts Chriſtians *to draw near, with a true heart in the full aſſurance of faith;* a certain evidence this, that one may have faith, and yet want the aſſurance of it.

2. It is alſo clear, from the *very nature of things;* for, to take refuge in Jeſus, is the *mean*, by which the ſoul attains to a confidence of its intereſt in him: now as the means and the end are things which are perfectly diſtinct from each other, ſo the *eſſence* and the *aſſurance* of faith cannot be viewed as one and the ſame.

3. In no part of our Bibles is it aſſerted, that our ſalvation is immediately connected with aſſurance, or abſolutely depends upon it; but on the contrary,—*To hunger and to thirſt after Chriſt's righteouſneſs,—to fly to Chriſt*, and *to ſeek refuge beneath the ſhadow of his wings*—theſe are repreſented as eſſentially neceſſary to obtain that *inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, which fadeth not away, and which is reſerved in heaven for the people of God.* See Pſalms ii. 12. *Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him.* —Alſo Pſ. lxix. 32. *The humble ſhall ſee this, and be glad; and your heart ſhall live, that ſeek God.* Now



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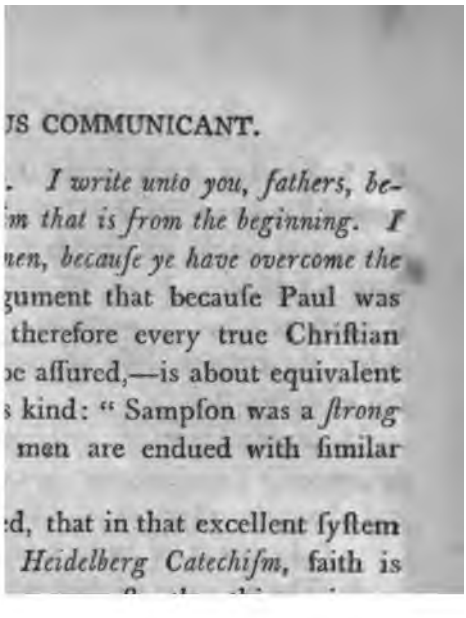

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"may therefore humbly conclude, that I am a child "of God."

But as it ſometimes happens, that although a ſoul dare not deny that it has experienced theſe things, yet it is afraid to conclude that it is in a ſtate of grace;—ſo there muſt be exiſting cauſes, which yet keep the ſoul in this uncertainty with reſpect to its intereſt in Chriſt. Is it aſked, what thoſe cauſes are? We reply,

a. It may be occaſioned by the ſubtil devices of Satan, who conſtantly ſeeks by every mean to perplex and diſquiet the ſouls of the people of God.

b. It may be occaſioned alſo by inattention on the part of believers to themſelves, and to divine truths; not diſtinguiſhing between the eſſence and the effects of faith.

c. It may further be occaſioned by this: The believer examining his heart diſcovers indeed many things which reſemble the operations of the Spirit; but at the ſame time he diſcerns many ſins and corruptions, which he believes cannot be conſiſtent with grace. Hence he is afraid to determine any thing favourable with reſpect to his ſtate.

d. Laſtly, it may be occaſioned principally by this,—that the Spirit of God imparts not ſufficient light to the ſoul to enable it to diſcover with clearneſs, that it poſſeſſes true grace.

C. In what manner does a ſoul conduct itſelf, in order that it may, on good grounds, be aſſured of faith? We reply, thus: The Chriſtian goes alone; he is impreſſed with a ſenſe of his being in the preſence of an omniſcient God; he views the buſineſs in which he is engaged to be of the laſt importance, on which depend eternal things; he ſeeks to have his mind compoſed; he beſeeches God to impart his

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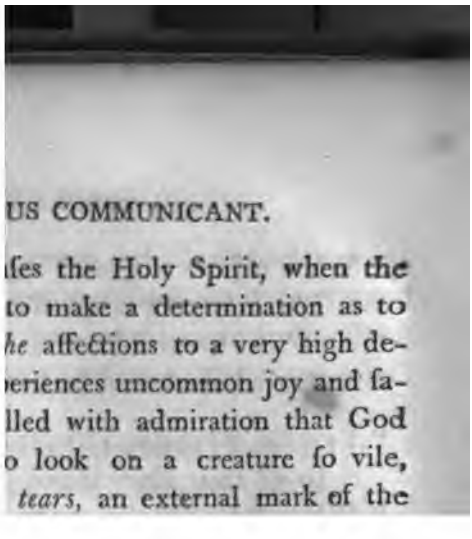
thirſt after Jeſus. He makes him bold to take refuge beneath the ſhadow of his wings. He inflames him with love to God,—and makes him anxiouſly deſire to evidence that love in a holy walk and converſation.

c. Upon this the Holy Spirit enables the believer *to draw this delightful concluſion:* "I find to be in "me all that which the word of God ſays I muſt "experience, and therefore I am a child of God, "and an heir of eternal life." But it muſt be here remarked, that this determination with reſpect to one's ſtate is not always ſo eaſily made.

Sometimes it is made with great *fear* and *concern.* It is as if the Chriſtian dared not go ſo far as to conclude favourably with reſpect to himſelf. He muſt indeed confeſs that God has dealt graciouſly with him; but ſtill the language of his heart conſtantly is—O! what an unhappy, what a wretched creature would I be, if now I have been deceiving myſelf, and continue believing myſelf to be a true Chriſtian, to a dying day, and then to find that my hope hath been but the *hope of the hypocrite,* which God hath ſaid *ſhall* periſh.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit enables the believer to come to this ſweet concluſion with much compoſure and calmneſs of mind. His affections are not greatly elevated, but with a believing heart he confides in the word of God; and comparing his ſtate with what is therein recorded, he exclaims, "I dare "not, I cannot, I may not deny it, that the Lord "has ſhown mercy to my ſoul. He has of a truth "*quickened me, who once was dead in treſpaſſes and in* "*ſins.* I would be unfaithful to my heavenly Fa- "ther, were I to aſcribe to the energies of nature all "that my ſoul has experienced."



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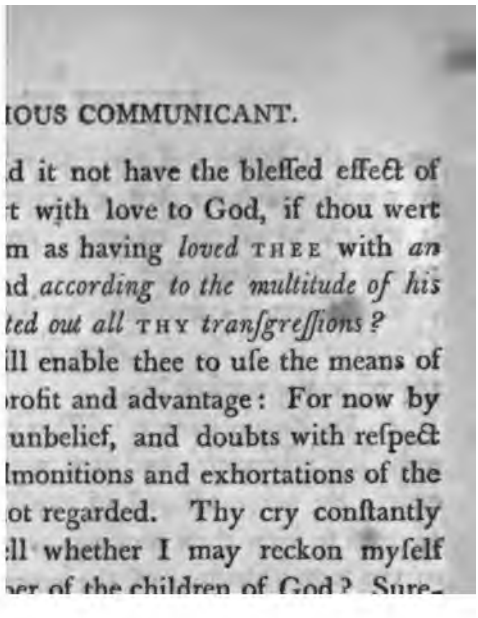
informed with reſpect to things
wiſe contribute to his preſent fe-

ter more to thy joys, than the reflection that on Scripture grounds thou mayſt ſay, "An all-ſufficient "God is my portion, even now whilſt I am ſojourn- "ing in this valley of tears, amidſt all the viciſſi- "tudes I meet with in life. I can meditate on death "without diſmay: For by means of death I ſhall be "brought into the immediate preſence of my Jeſus. "At death my joys will be ſupreme, and therefore "in the proſpect of it, I can exult in this triumphant "language of the apoſtle, *O death, where is thy ſting?* "*O grave, where is thy victory? The ſting of death* "*is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law: But thanks* "*be to God, which giveth us the victory through our* "*Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*" But to be continually in a ſtate of doubt and uncertainty will deprive thee of all comfort, and thy days will be paſſed in the experience of diſquietude.

3. Satan, who is an enemy to thy happineſs, and envies thee the eternal felicity which awaits thee, is conſtantly ſeeking to lead thee from thy God. But, believer, being aſſured of thy faith, thou wilt quit thyſelf like a man, and be ſtrong in repelling his fiery darts.

4. Haſt thou a deſire of progreſſing in holineſs? Aſſurance is the beſt mean to obtain that end. For until thou art aſſured, thou canſt not be grateful to God for grace beſtowed upon thee in Chriſt. It is true thou mayſt thank God for having appointed a Mediator, and revealed a plan of ſalvation; but will not thy gratitude be expreſſed in far higher ſtrains, when thou canſt add the term ME, and ſay, "*I thank* "*thee, Father, who hath made* ME *meet for the inheri-* "*tance of the ſaints in light*, Col. i. 12. *Bleſſed be* "*the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who* "*hath bleſſed* ME *with all ſpiritual bleſſings in Chriſt,*"



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

d it not have the bleſſed effect of
t with love to God, if thou wert
m as having *loved* THEE with *an*
ıd *according to the multitude of his*
ted out all THY *tranſgreſſions?*
ill enable thee to uſe the means of
rofit and advantage: For now by
unbelief, and doubts with reſpect
lmonitions and exhortations of the
ot regarded. Thy cry conſtantly
ll whether I may reckon myſelf
er of the children of God? Sure-

againſt the divine and precious religion of thy Jeſus, by a walk which manifeſts the ſupreme delights which it affords to all its votaries; and thus allure them to the divine Redeemer.

7. Aſſurance contributes to the advantage of the Chriſtian in every ſituation in which he may be placed in the preſent life.

A. In Prosperity. *When the ſecret of God is upon thy tabernacle, and thou waſheſt thy ſteps with butter,* by being aſſured of thy faith, thou wilt be enabled to view theſe bleſſings as agreeable additions to the better bleſſings of the covenant, and to have been diſpenſed by a compaſſionate God and Father, in and through the merits of the Saviour. This delightful retroſpect will create ſentiments of genuine gratitude in thy heart. Doſt thou expect, believer, a better portion than this world can afford? Being aſſured of thy faith, thou wilt find thy heart more weaned from things of time and ſenſe, and diſpoſed *not to look at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal,* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

B. In Adversity. To be aſſured of faith will alſo make thee patient and ſubmiſſive when the hand of thy God diſpenſes ſevere trials, and his providential acts are ſuch as to bring thee into circumſtances moſt diſtreſſing. For being ſtrong in faith thou wilt ſee that all ſublunary things are of uncertain enjoyment, in no wiſe conſtitute thy chief good, and are not to be compared with thoſe *better* and durable treaſures which are laid up for thee in heaven. Theſe conſiderations will induce thee in the worſt of times to commit to thy covenant God all thy concerns, and cauſe thee thus to reaſon with thyſelf:

ys what is beſt for me—It is there-
le that it will contribute more to
o be kept in the furnace of afflic-
others to baſk beneath the bright
erity. *Let him do unto me what*
his ſight!"

and unexpected emergencies to be
ntereſt in Chriſt, will produce an
thy ſoul, and compoſed by the
Jeſus reigns, thou wilt be able to
the language of David, and with
ſay,—*Though the earth be removed,*

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

ſt loſe thy wonted boldneſs and
roaching thy God.
here ſo much comfort and true
from a well-grounded aſſurance?
that in our day ſo ſmall a number
ns are to be met with? This was
we propoſed to inveſtigate.
ſo? Reaſons can be aſſigned for
ART OF GOD, and ON THE PART
ER HIMSELF.
PART OF GOD. It pleaſes the

that *Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.* The ungodly man, when he ſees believers, who perhaps have been long travelling the celeſtial road, diſcovering ſuch evidences of fear and doubts with reſpect to their future ſtate, there is a probability of his being brought to reaſon thus with himſelf: "What muſt be my final doom? *If the* "righteous are SCARCELY *ſaved, where ſhall I ap-* "*pear?*"

2. But do there exiſt on the part of God ſuch wiſe and holy reaſons, that ſo few of his dear children attain to aſſurance? We further remark, that cauſes may be aſſigned alſo ON THE PART OF BELIEVERS THEMSELVES, why this aſſurance which is ſo deſirable to all Chriſtians, is ſo ſeldom enjoyed.

A. One cauſe is, that they do not DEVOTE SUFFICIENT TIME TO ACQUIRE THE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTHS, by which they would form to themſelves proper views of the nature of faith and of aſſurance, as alſo of other intereſting truths of religion. It is becauſe their knowledge of theſe is contracted and ſuperficial, that they are ſo often toſſed like the ſhip in the midſt of the tempeſtuous ocean, and experience ſo much diſquietude in the divine life.

B. Many Chriſtians ſeem to CHERISH DESPONDING SENTIMENTS OF THEMSELVES. They are for ever complaining with reſpect to their ſtate, as if the eſſence of Chriſtianity conſiſted therein. Remove any one difficulty with which they are oppreſſed, and inſtantly many others ariſe.

C. Many LIVE TOO INATTENTIVE TO THE SECRET DUTIES OF RELIGION. They engage not enough in holy meditation, and are too neglectful of *wreſtling with* God alone in prayer. They

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

but it is not with that engagedneſs
the nature of the duty requires.
content themſelves with having
exerciſe, and feel not that diſ-
to pierce their inmoſt ſouls; when
ɔt find. And may not a conduct
ıovah to withhold from his people
untenance, and induce him to ma-
diſpleaſure?

ſtians live WITHOUT THAT CIR-
CARE, AND TENDERNESS IN

tians participate! Holineſs is the ſureſt way to obtain aſſurance. If God's children walk tenderly in his preſence, and diſplay in all their deportment an affection and regard for him, he will obſerve a ſimilar part, and by gracious manifeſtations of his complacency, diſplay to their ſouls the pleaſure he takes in them. And although your want of prudence and circumſpection in your lives ſhall not keep you ultimately out of heaven, yet it is this which makes the road leading thither thorny and irkſome.

VI. Do any then enquire, WHAT ARE THE MEANS WHICH CHRISTIANS MUST EMPLOY IN ORDER TO ATTAIN TO AN ASSURANCE WHICH IS FIRM AND WELL-GROUNDED? This was in the SIXTH place, what was propoſed to be ſhown.

1. Is thine IGNORANCE, believer, one of the cauſes of thy living in a ſtate of doubt, as to thine intereſt in Chriſt? BE VIGILANT, and ENDEAVOUR by EVERY MEAN to OBTAIN a CLEAR, ACCURATE, and DISTINCT KNOWLEDGE of DIVINE TRUTHS, ESPECIALLY OF THOSE WHICH RESPECT *the nature* of FAITH and aſſurance. Thou doſt perhaps often exerciſe faith, and thou knoweſt it not becauſe of thine ignorance as it regards its nature and eſſential acts. If thou wert aware that faith conſiſts in one's running and flying to Chriſt, and examined thy heart by the word of God, thou couldſt not avoid acknowledging, that thou wert a poſſeſſor of it.

2. COMPARE NOT THINE EXERCISES WITH GREAT AND MORE ADVANCED CHRISTIANS, and then think that becauſe thou haſt not experienced the ſame, that therefore thou haſt no grace. No: rather conſider, that among the people of God are found BRUISED REEDS as well as the STATELY

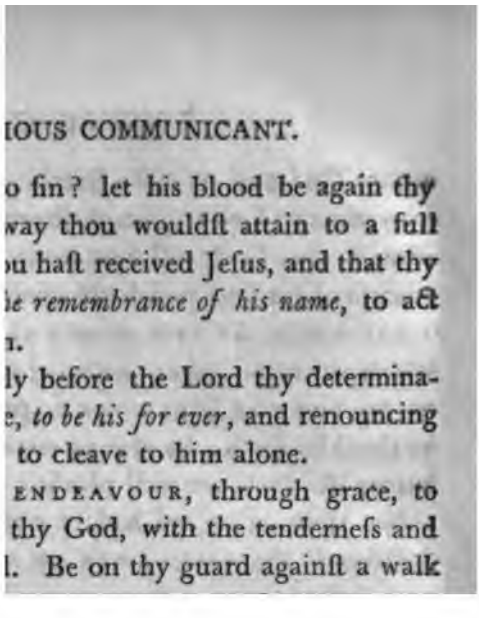
ANON. Thoſe whoſe faith is weak, who are STRONG IN THE LORD; o are feeble among the flock are as hoſe whoſe attainments have been

O DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THY FRAMES. Thy ſtate has always the moment thou firſt believedſt, equently change. Is thy ſoul in ened and inſpirited? Thy frames l thou feeleſt a degree of aſſurance. feleſs, and as it were unanimated?

" ſelf, and I would be equally indiſpoſed *to deſpiſe* " *the day of ſmall things*, or eſtimate at too low a rate " the operations of thy Spirit, as if they were effects " which could be produced by the energies of my " natural powers. I have of a truth been exerciſed " in ſuch a way, and experienced things which could " have been wrought in me by no human power. " Surely it is thy work,—O enable me to believe " it!"

5. UNBOSOM THYSELF to thoſe of thy friends and acquaintance, who by reaſon of the improvement they have made, through grace, in divine knowledge, can be inſtrumental to render thee ſupport and aſſiſtance. It is not intended, by giving thee this advice, to inſinuate that *all* thy friends, even thoſe who are pious, ſhould be told the particulars of thy caſe. This might work an injury. ALL are not capable of being boſom friends. Some by their ignorance, imprudence, and dogmatical opinions, or by a want of knowing how to feel for the woes of others, and to ſympathize with them in diſtreſs, are more adapted to depreſs the mind than to elevate its hopes. Communicate the ſecrets of thy heart to thoſe who, having been taught themſelves by experience and much obſervation, the ways which the ETERNAL holds with his people, CAN, and who, having a heart inclined to commiſerate thoſe in diſtreſs, and at the ſame time to *glorify their Father in heaven*, WILL deal in a tender, affectionate, and faithful manner with thee.

6. BE CONSTANT AND LIVELY IN THE EXERCISE OF FAITH; hunger and thirſt more after Chriſt; run, haſten, fly every day with increaſed vigour unto him with all thoſe burdens, beneath the preſſing weight of which thou art nigh to ſinking.



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

o ſin? let his blood be again thy
way thou wouldſt attain to a full
ou haſt received Jeſus, and that thy
e remembrance of his name, to act
n.

ly before the Lord thy determina-
e, *to be his for ever*, and renouncing
to cleave to him alone.

ENDEAVOUR, through grace, to
thy God, with the tenderneſs and
l. Be on thy guard againſt a walk

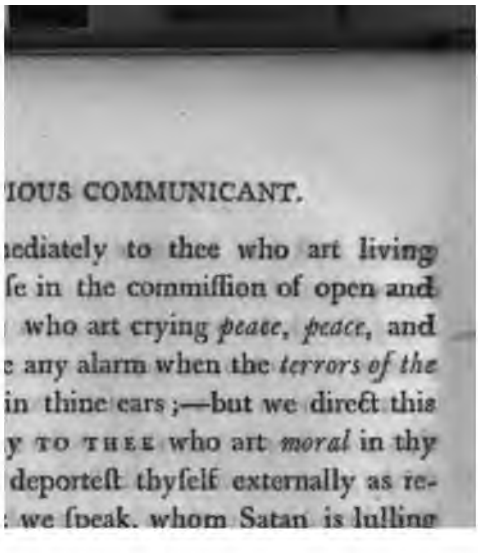
venant God, and to make ſuitable returns, by a holy converſation, for the grace beſtowed upon thee. Be aſſured, that God will not leave himſelf without a witneſs of his love and faithfulneſs.

11. Laſtly, IF THY HEAVENLY FATHER COMMUNICATE TO THEE ANY LIGHT, CHERISH IT WITH THE GREATEST CARE; prize it moſt highly; be thankful for it; be always *meek* and humble; for frames like theſe are well pleaſing to thy God.

See thus, what we had to obſerve on the great doctrine of the ASSURANCE OF FAITH.—We muſt now endeavour in a more particular manner to improve the ſubject, firſt with a view to the conviction of thoſe WHO AS YET ARE IN A STATE OF NATURE, and then TO THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THOSE WHO ARE THE CHOSEN AND REDEEMED OF THE LORD.

Is it aſked, What advantage can natural men derive from what has been ſaid, ſince *they know not the things of the Spirit of God?* We reply, It may ſerve to make them form high and exalted ſentiments of the principles of Chriſtianity, and create in them at leaſt ſecret deſires to be in a ſtate in which they may live comfortably and die happily. It may be attended alſo with this advantage, to convince them that they have been at eaſe in their ſins, and have fondly indulged themſelves with a hope of heaven, while there was not the leaſt foundation for it. For if to a child of God the aſſurance of faith be a matter of ſuch importance, certainly THEY have abundant reaſon to ſearch their hearts with the greateſt care, eſpecially before they appear at the table of the Lord, *leſt they eat and drink judgment to themſelves.*

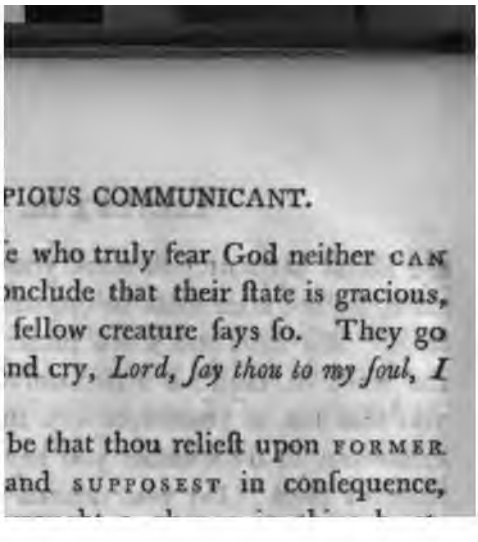
Come then, infatuated ſinner, who art paſſing through life with ſo much unconcern! we addreſs



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

ediately to thee who art living
ſe in the commiſſion of open and
who art crying *peace, peace*, and
e any alarm when the *terrors of the*
in thine ears;—but we direct this
y TO THEE who art *moral* in thy
deporteſt thyſelf externally as re-
we ſpeak, whom Satan is lulling

ſaying to thyſelf, I HAVE BEEN
TIAN PARENTS, EDUCATED IN
AND, AND FROM MY YOUTH UP
IOUS IMPRESSIONS OF RELI-
NTS HAVE OFTEN PRAYED FOR
ſe advantages on which I may reſt
ve had ſuch advantages was indeed
being thus ſituated in life, thou haſt
eſerved from many ſins into which
ouldſt have fallen. But thy pa-
t the power to change thy heart.



PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

e who truly fear God neither CAN
nclude that their ſtate is gracious,
fellow creature ſays ſo. They go
nd cry, *Lord, ſay thou to my ſoul, I*

be that thou relieſt upon FORMER
and SUPPOSEST in conſequence,

f your union to him. Do all in come inſtrumental of binding up t, and of encouraging thy fellow- ſouls, as David expreſſes it in the , are diſquieted within them. Go ce of children to the table which eaven, your Jeſus, hath prepared r the returns of thoſe ſeaſons when l, and when you ſhall ſit down *e eating of bread and drinking of* elves to your Saviour God. Long of that glorious day when with nd Jacob you ſhall enjoy the ſweet

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

e who are in a gracious ſtate, and
nmon thing for real believers to be
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out the principal ſources whence
fears proceed.
ion ſome of thoſe MEANS, in the
ls which are in doubt, and filled
reſpect to their eternal concerns,
to enjoy divine conſolation on
ugh this wilderneſs to the heavenly

ire will conclude with ſome AD-

that among the children of God there are thoſe who may be compared to *bruiſed reeds*, and others who are likened to the ſtately *cedars of Lebanon*. Hence, whilſt ſome triumph by faith, others are found who entertain deſponding thoughts with reſpect to their caſe, and go through life doubting of their intereſt in Chriſt's purchaſed ſalvation.

3. The EXAMPLES which are recorded in ſcripture of particular ſaints who have been in great doubt, and who have been oppreſſed with much fear concerning their ſtate, clearly ſettles the point in queſtion. David himſelf prayed, Pſalm li. 12, *Reſtore unto me the joy of thy ſalvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit;* and in Pſalm xxx. 7, he addreſſes the Eternal thus: *Lord, by thy favour thou haſt made my mountain to ſtand ſtrong: thou didſt hide thy face, and I was troubled.* Hear the language of Aſaph, Pſalm lxxvii. 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, *I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my ſpirit was overwhelmed. Will the Lord caſt off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promiſe fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger ſhut up his tender mercies? And I ſaid, this is* MY INFIRMITY. What repreſentation did Heman make of his caſe? Pſalm lxxxviii. 14, 15, 16, *Lord, why caſteſt thou off my ſoul? why hideſt thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up. While I ſuffer thy terrors I am diſtracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.* Attend alſo to the complaint of the church, Pſalm cii. 4, 9. *My heart is ſmitten and withered like graſs, ſo that I forget to eat my bread. By reaſon of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my ſkin. I am like a pelican of the wilderneſs; I am like an owl of the*

ıd am like a ſparrow alone upon the
nemies reproach me all the day, and
againſt me are ſworn againſt me.
ſhes like bread, and mingled my drink

RIENCE OF BELIEVERS IN ALL

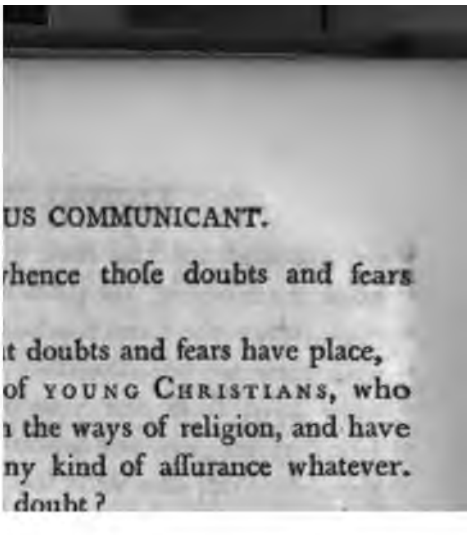
; our aſſertion. Many of God's
ſt brought from a ſtate of nature to
eceive much light and enjoy much
if God's Spirit hath drawn them to
rds of love. But let them travel on
rther; let God withhold the influ-

from Jeſus, the ſun of righteouſneſs, but who at times are *covered* with midnight *darkneſs*, and are often alarmed leſt they ſhall ultimately be excluded the kingdom of heaven.

The doubts and deſpondencies, which believers of this laſt deſcription experience, COME SUDDENLY upon them.—At the very time they are living in fellowſhip with God, and in the exerciſe of faith and love, it frequently happens that before they are aware, Satan aſſaults their ſouls, injects his fiery darts, and demands—" Thou who calleſt thyſelf a believer, " how doſt thou know that thou art ſincere in thy " profeſſions of religion? What evidence art thou " in poſſeſſion of that thy faith is genuine?" But it muſt here be remarked, that by means of the light which, by the illuminating influence of the Spirit, hath beamed in their minds; and being accuſtomed to live by faith, they ſoon aſcertain the ſource whence theſe fiery darts come; and therefore, though for a ſeaſon their diſtreſſes run high, and their hearts may verge towards deſpondency, yet in the end they will ſee that all this has been working together for their good, even to *eſtabliſh their goings* more and more. The truth of this remark was exemplified in the experience of the pſalmiſt. *His anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life. Weeping*, ſaid he, *may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*

3. As thoſe who CONSTANTLY SPEND their days, STRUGGLING BETWEEN HOPE AND FEAR, are always in bitterneſs, and continually complaining, like perſons who labour under a lingering diſeaſe, SUCH believers are conſidered in this lecture. To them, in a peculiar manner, we addreſs ourſelves, when,

SECONDLY, We proceed to point out the PRIN-



US COMMUNICANT.

hence thoſe doubts and fears

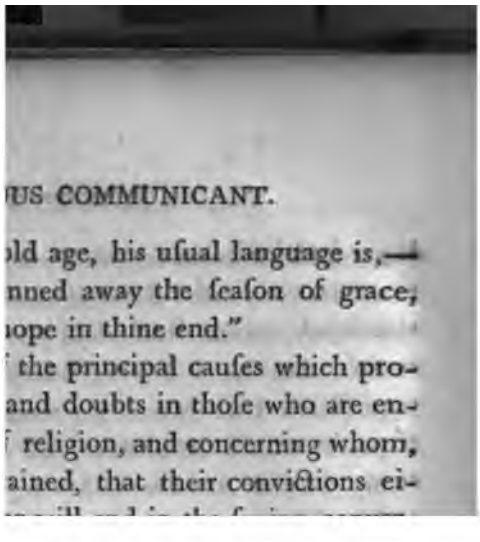
t doubts and fears have place,
of YOUNG CHRISTIANS, who
the ways of religion, and have
ny kind of aſſurance whatever.
doubt?

" our acquaintance," ſay they, " can tell the day, the " hour, the moment, the particular ſickneſs, the ſer- " mon, when the Lord touched their hearts. But " with theſe we are altogether unacquainted. We " have lived from our youths up, profeſſing the " Chriſtian religion, and deporting ourſelves as ſtrict " moraliſts; our education has been pious, and our " companions, men who feared the Lord. But ah! " unto this day we know of no remarkable change " which has taken place." Now when God by his Spirit works in their hearts, they are afraid to view them as gracious operations, eſpecially if that work be carried on in a mild manner, and they are brought over to God and to his ſervice, without having their affections greatly excited. They rather conceive them to be the effects, either of a pious education, of a mild and placid temper, or of a natural averſion to objects of ſenſe. And this unfavourable concluſion with reſpect to their ſtate is drawn, merely becauſe they cannot fix in their minds on the preciſe time when they were born again.——It is granted that ſuch perſons cannot with eaſe, at all times, determine their true ſituation before God; and that they require the cleareſt marks of grace, when oppreſſed with doubts and fears, to evince to themſelves that they are truly in a gracious ſtate.

c. Again, the doubts and fears of others proceed from this quarter,—THAT they have never experienced an INSTANTANEOUS CHANGE OF HEART. " Under many a ſermon," ſay they, " our con- " ſciences have been awakened;—but we have as of- " ten ſuppreſſed ſuch awakening. Time after time, " God hath knocked at the door of our hearts, but " we have not paid due attention to his preſſing

indeed have reſolved to live in
from what we had done before;
were no ſooner made than they
were never accompanied with an
f our ſouls to God in Chriſt,
hs and years had elapſed; when
proved to be too powerful, over-
tion, and ſubdued our hearts to

his deſcription are often greatly
rk hath not been done in truth.



US COMMUNICANT.

ld age, his uſual language is,—
nned away the ſeaſon of grace;
ope in thine end."
the principal cauſes which pro-
and doubts in thoſe who are en-
religion, and concerning whom,
ained, that their convictions ei-

"a courſe of holineſs, yet I am frequently made the "victim *of a heart deceitful above all things, and deſ-* "*perately wicked*, and yield to the firſt emotion of "ſin. Surely, if I were really a child of God, or "poſſeſſed true grace, ſin would be mortified, its "power would be broken; for the apoſtle, addreſſ-"ing himſelf to the believing Romans, declares, "*Sin ſhall have no more dominion over you*," Rom. vi. 14.

b. Some of God's dear children are alarmed, BECAUSE THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE THINGS IS NOT MORE CLEAR, PRECISE, AND EXTENSIVE. "It is preſumption," ſay they, "for us ever "to think to come into heaven, having ſuch imper-"fect ideas on matters of religion." They are alarmed the more on this account, when they compare the little improvement which they have made in divine knowledge, with the vaſt acquiſitions of many whoſe attainments are ſuch, that whilſt they are able to ſee with great perſpicuity, the connection, harmony, and wiſdom of the plan, as revealed by God for the recovery of ſinners, alſo poſſeſs an ability of ſpeaking on thoſe ſubjects, ſo as to benefit and highly contribute to the advantage of others.

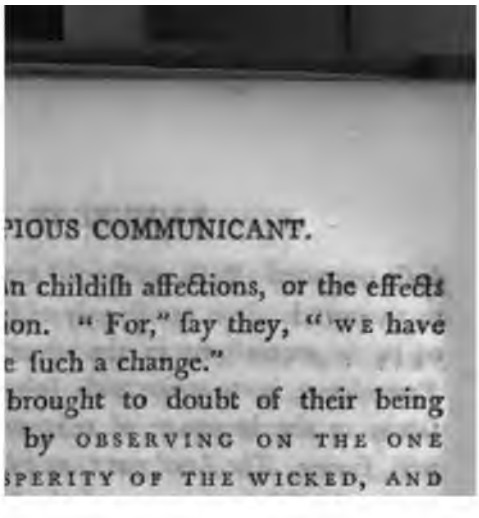
c. It is no uncommon thing for Chriſtians to be diſtreſſed, BECAUSE IN THEIR FIRST EXERCISES, WHEN THEY GAVE THEMSELVES AWAY TO GOD AND CHRIST, THEY EXPERIENCED BUT LITTLE JOY AND ENLARGEDNESS OF SOUL, IN COMPARISON WITH WHAT MANY OF THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD HAVE FELT. "Is it poſſible," ſay they, "that we have in reality been brought out of "a ſtate of nature into a ſtate of grace? that we have "ſincerely devoted ourſelves to the Lord? when, at "the time we ſuppoſe that change was wrought, and

nder made, we were ſo unaffected,
the joys and conſolations with
ave been elated, and peculiarly
annot be, we have all along been
nd hope, that we were in covenant
alas! our hope has wanted a

fears ariſe in the minds of others;
y are not convinced but that they
l themſelves to God and his ſer-
, yet BECAUSE THEY DO NOT

TIME ARE NOT CONSCIOUS THAT ANY ATROCIOUS SINS HAVE INTERVENED, WHICH MIGHT HAVE CAUSED A CHANGE SO REMARKABLE.— They conclude, that all the hopes they had once ſo fondly cheriſhed, were without any grounds, and that all their former experiences were but imaginary ones. "For," ſay they, "if they had been real, "God would not have thus withdrawn from us the "light of his countenance."

f. Other Chriſtians, when they deliberately ſurvey the dealings of God with their ſouls, doubt of their being children of God, BECAUSE, HAVING BEEN CONVERTED IN THEIR YOUTH, THEY CANNOT, LIKE OTHERS, SPEAK OF THEIR EXERCISES WITH RESPECT TO REGENERATION, A CHANGE OF HEART, OR A PASSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE. In the days of their youth, they felt that they loved Jeſus; that they hated ſin; that they ardently deſired to depart from it; and that it was their ſupreme delight to hear and meditate upon his word: But having advanced in life, and their corruptions having obtained greater ſtrength, thoſe ſweet emotions have in a manner ceaſed, and the affections which were once ſo lively, are lulled to ſleep. Then again the Eternal awakens them from their lethargy; their hatred of ſin again returns; again they would flee from it as their moſt deadly foe; again their ſouls are inflamed with love to the Lord Jeſus, and to all that bear his image; and again they go on their way in the experience of much calmneſs and compoſedneſs. Now whenever perſons of this deſcription hear other Chriſtians converſe on the ſubject of the new *birth*, and the marvellous change which it produced in them, they begin to be ſuſpicious, and to imagine that all their exerciſes were



PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

in childiſh affections, or the effects
ion. "For," ſay they, "WE have
e ſuch a change."
brought to doubt of their being
by OBSERVING ON THE ONE
SPERITY OF THE WICKED, AND

ſuch temporal afflictions ſhould excite fear and doubt in the mind. It is not ſo eaſy as ſome may ſuppoſe, to be ſo acquieſcent in the adverſe diſpenſations of Providence, as to unite with Job, and expreſs ourſelves in the language of reſignation to the Divine will, ſaying, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord.*

h. There are alſo ſome of God's people who queſtion their being in a gracious ſtate, BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO STRUGGLE AGAINST SO MANY SINFUL AND BLASPHEMOUS THOUGHTS OF GOD. Are they engaged in public worſhip or in ſecret prayer? their thoughts are often wandering to and fro. On a ſudden, ſuggeſtions are made to their minds of a moſt dreadful nature, at which they not only muſt recoil, but which fills them with terror; and which they dare not mention to their neareſt friends. "Can ſuch thoughts," ſay they, "ariſe in the hearts "of thoſe who are converted to God, and who poſ- "ſeſs that divine principle *which purifies* THE "HEART. It cannot be; and therefore we muſt "conclude, that God is not our Father, that Jeſus is "no Saviour of ours, and that his Spirit dwells not "in us."

i. Another will expreſs himſelf thus: "I dare not, "on any principle whatever, hope, that a good work "is begun in me; for the LIFE OF GRACE IS A "HIDDEN LIFE, which is exerciſed when the Chriſ- "tian is alone with his God. But this is not my "caſe; for, in the preſence of my fellow men indeed "I appear in the character of a child of God. "When I am in company with the pious, I can "with fluency and fervour converſe on the great "and leading doctrines of grace—I can join with "them in prayer.—My external deportment is vaſt-

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

ı that of the men of the world—
nd diſpoſitions comport not with
n waiting upon God in his ordi-
ıs my heart been awakened. But,
TIRE ALONE but both MY ZEAL,
N, and my attention CEASE and
I cannot, with any fixedneſs of
on God or on divine truths; my
ı on my tongue; all is dulneſs;
ains.—And are not theſe the true
hypocrites, who like myſelf have

apply the healing balm to each of theſe wounds, and POINT OUT THE MEANS, by which thoſe followers of Jeſus may proceed heaven-ward, in the experience of comfort, joy, and peace.—Each particular caſe, in the order they have been ſtated, will be ſeparately conſidered, and that advice ſuggeſted which may appear ſuitable.

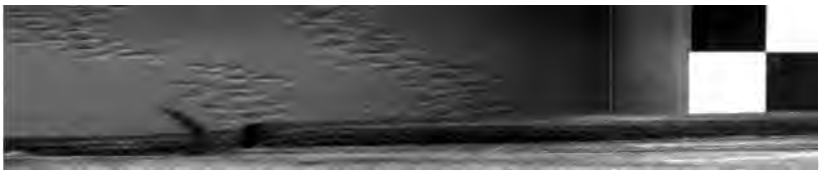
The doubts and fears of YOUNG Chriſtians

1. Ariſe from an apprehenſion that their convictions are not genuine, becauſe THEY WERE NEVER ACCOMPANIED WITH THAT GREAT DISTRESS OF MIND WHICH THEY HAVE SEEN OTHERS TO EXPERIENCE. But let,

a. Such learn to attend with care TO THE WAYS OF GOD IN DISPENSING GRACE. All his children are not led in one and the ſame way. Some muſt drink of the bitter waters of MARAH, whilſt others may recline beneath the *palm-trees*, and regale on the ſtreams which iſſue from the *wells of Elim*. Yes, it ſometimes happens that thoſe who have been the boldeſt in iniquity, have been brought to the enjoyment of fellowſhip with God, in a way the moſt eaſy and endearing, without having more convictions and views of the awful nature of ſin than were abſolutely neceſſary to induce them to turn their eyes to Jeſus, and to come unto him, that they might receive freely at his hands a right to life and ſalvation, which he alone poſſeſſes an all-ſufficiency to impart.—Whilſt others, who have led ſober and moral lives, have been AWFULLY brought over to Chriſt; they have experienced in their conſciences, terrors equalled only by the torments of hell; their anguiſh at the contemplation of their ſin and guilt the human tongue cannot deſcribe; the dread horrors of their minds burſt into view, being depicted

ances. By all this, the Lord de-
m, that to lean upon their own
is abominable in his ſight as to
To the end, therefore, that you
ea joy in believing, ſeek to be-
ith the various ways according to
ls his people to their manſions in

EGREE OF CONVICTIONS which
ve had, be a *rule* by which you
INENESS of your own. Say not,



conſequences, excite you to fly unto him for the life of your ſouls?—Are you compelled to reply, "Yes, "I muſt confeſs that Jeſus is dear to my heart, and "in every reſpect precious?"—We can then on the warrant of God's own word aſſure you, that your convictions have been ſufficiently great; for all the end which God propoſes to accompliſh by them is to drive the ſinner, miſerable and wretched as he is, to Chriſt. If they effect not this, to whatever degree they may ariſe, ſo far will they be from bringing you to heaven, that they will bring you, as they did Judas, to awful deſpair; for, as has been remarked, Jeſus, and faith in his name, conſtitute the only ground on which a ſinner can hope to be ſaved. And has it pleaſed God to bring you over to Chriſt in a mild and eaſy way? duty demands that you give him the praiſe for having drawn you with the cords of love, without feeling that undeſcribable anguiſh

Jeſus did once to his diſcipl
aſk, Matt. xx. 22.

2. Or do your doubts an
YOU HAVE NO CERTAIN
TIME AND PLACE WHEN
HEARTS WERE CHANGED,
often been awakened, and in
ed a religious education? To
remark,

a. That duty demands, that
through your whole lives yo
ſciences awakened. It is a ce
eye has been upon you for g
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into which it is likely you w
fallen.

b. Was your education fo
you been kept from being del
the world, or charmed by its a
This will greatly contribute
For it will not be difficult for y
hearts from it, whilſt others *halt*

c. Think not that it is any
able to deſignate the exact time
knowledge of the time of your b ...ade ſpiritually
alive belongs no more to the eſſence of regeneration
than it appertains to the eſſence of man that he
know preciſely the time of his birth. It is enough
that we know that we are men.

d. Look back to ſome former period of your lives,
and then let each one aſk himſelf, "Am I not now a
"different perſon from what I then was? Do I not
"ſee divine truths through another medium, and
"with other eyes. Are not my deſires more hea-
"venly than once they were? Have I not different

"objects of purſuit? Are not mine exerciſes of ano-
"ther nature? Can I find reſt barely in the external
"profeſſion of religion, as was once the caſe? Does
"it not rejoice my ſoul, when I find that my con-
"victions do not wear away, but ſerve to excite me
"to haſte, to run, to fly to Jeſus?" Canſt thou not anſwer each or the moſt of theſe queſtions in the affirmative? Well then, conſider not your ſtate to be hopeleſs, merely becauſe you know not the *time* when God commenced his work of grace upon your hearts; but rather let your conſtant language be that of the man that was born blind:—*One thing I know, that once I was blind, but now I ſee*, John ix. 25.

3. Are ye diſtreſſed? Do fears ariſe BECAUSE GOD hath not as it were IN A MOMENT CHANGED YOUR HEARTS;—becauſe he is CARRYING ON HIS WORK GRADUALLY;—becauſe you have been OFTEN AWAKENED, and HAVE SUPPRESSED in a manner thoſe awakenings? To ſuch fearful ſouls we would juſt ſuggeſt,

a. That it is not impoſſible that in your firſt convictions, the principle of true grace may have exiſted; but becauſe it did not pleaſe God to make ſuch a diſplay of his power as he ſometimes does, thoſe firſt ſmall ſparks which were enkindled, ſeemed afterwards to be entirely extinguiſhed.—By this mode of dealing, God may have deſigned to wean your hearts by little and little from the world, and to prepare them for a complete ſurrender to himſelf, and to his ſervice. Your convictions may indeed have ſubſided, but have they ever altogether diſappeared, ſo as to leave behind no awakenings of conſcience?—Does there not ſtill remain, a fear of offending your God?

b. That it is a duty, to examine with care, whether your FORMER convictions did not proceed more

from having contemplated God as vindictive in his juſtice, and from a dread of puniſhment, the neceſſary conſequence of ſin, than from love and eſteem for God; and whether thoſe with which you are now exerciſed do not cauſe you to ſee more of the evil of ſin, as that which makes you unlike to God; and to behold charms in the ſervice of the Lord, which before you never witneſſed?

c. Have not your convictions already produced a conſiderable change in your hearts and lives? Did you not once pant after the world, and are you not longing now for God as your portion, and for Chriſt as your Redeemer? The time was, when you could not bear the thought of being debarred from the pleaſures and company of the world; but are you not now inclined to forſake both,—to delight yourſelves in the Lord, and aſſociate with thoſe who fear him? Once, to be alone was your burden; but NOW do you not find your greateſt ſatisfaction when retired from the buſy ſcenes of life, and engaged in the ſecret duties of religion? Have you experienced any of theſe things? Then, on the beſt of grounds you may hope, that the ETERNAL having thus laid his hand upon you in mercy, hath effected a change truly ſaving.

d. Are you afraid, that if you had the ſame opportunities to ſin which you have had, you would embrace them? Such fear is good. It is an evidence that you have felt your inability. It will excite you to cleave to the Lord more and more for preſerving and ſanctifying grace.

e. And here, *in general*, it muſt be urged upon ALL, that they beware of oppoſing the firſt convictions which they may diſcover to be wrought in others, leſt they render thoſe diſtreſſed and diſconſolate, who are dear to God, and precious in his

ſight. And thou, CONVINCED SIN[illegible] ticularly on thy guard againſt ſuppreſſ[illegible] victions. Doſt thou perceive in thy hea[illegible] emotions? be careful to cheriſh them. [illegible] ſeek to bring thee into a ſnare, by tempti[illegible] to ſhake them off. But liſten not to his deluſions. Seek by every mean of grace to keep them alive, until they produce a total and unreſerved ſurrender of thy heart to God.

4. DOST THOU FEAR THAT THOU HAST COMMITTED THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, AND THEREFORE GIVE UP ALL HOPES OF BEING SAVED?

a. Believe that this is only a ſuggeſtion of the devil, an artifice deviſed in the regions of the damned, with a view of rendering thy life wretched, and of depriving thee of all the joys of religion.

b. Thou ſayeſt, "I have committed that awful "ſin, which ſhall never be forgiven;—my hopes are "for ever cut off—I am excluded from pardon, and "debarred from expecting remiſſion, even through "the merits of Jeſus."——In our humble opinion, thou art wholly ignorant of the nature of the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt: For if thou hadſt the leaſt knowledge of it, thou muſt have been perfectly ſatisfied that thou couldſt not poſſibly have been guilty of it. For the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt cannot be committed but by *thoſe whoſe underſtandings have been illuminated, and whoſe attainments in the knowledge of divine truths have been peculiarly great: and who without cauſe, for the ſake of ſome temporal advantage, and from a principle of hatred and oppoſition to God, have renounced the truths of the goſpel, without having ever the leaſt ſorrow, diſtreſs, or contrition of heart on that account:* For if any perſon, guilty of

ſſibly feel that genuine ſorrow and
ld drive him to God and to Chriſt,
ırdon for ſuch a ſinner, as well as
other deſcription.—But—remem-
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always given over to hardneſs of
er feel the leaſt compunction for
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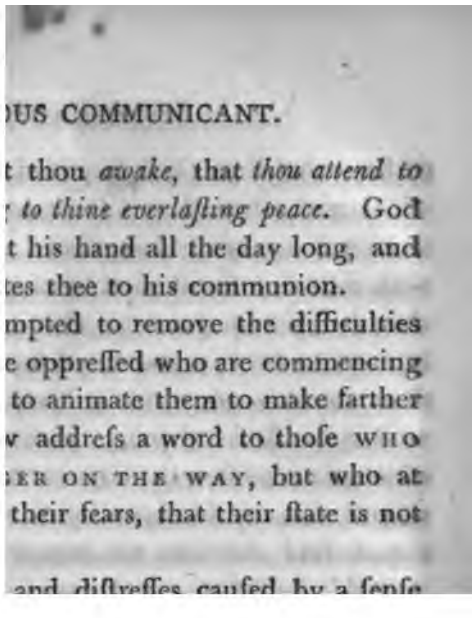
ıme. Like infernal ſpirits in the
the damned, they live but to op-

having committed the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; and even in reſpect to one who may appear to us to have been guilty of that dreadful crime, difficult abſolutely to determine; for from experience we are taught, that men may go the greateſt lengths in ſinning, and ſtill become the ſubjects of true converſion. It is not for us to preſcribe limits to the riches of divine grace. On the contrary, the word of God preſents us with marks in abundance, by which a perſon may aſcertain, not only that he is not a veſſel of wrath, but a veſſel of mercy—not a reprobate, but an object of electing love. And amongſt the great variety of marks, this is *one*,—That we chooſe God for our portion, deſire to *walk in the light of his countenance*, and *follow after holineſs*. Aſk thyſelf then, whether God is the ſupreme object of thy delight; whether thou deſireſt that he would direct thee in all thy ways; and whether thou art purſuing the paths which he hath ſet thee? And if thou find that thou canſt honeſtly reply in the affirmative, give thyſelf no anxious concern, but *leave ſecret things with God*.

6. Is thy mind diſquieted, BECAUSE THOU FEAREST, THAT NOW IT IS FOR EVER TOO LATE FOR THEE TO OBTAIN SALVATION; THAT THY DAY OF GRACE IS PAST?—This is no other than a temptation of Satan. It can never be too late for thee to ſeek for grace at the hand of God. Scripture gives ONE inſtance of this, the thief on the croſs, to the end that none might deſpair, and yet but *one*, that none might preſume. We read, Matt. xx. 5, 6, of ſome that were called, as well at the *eleventh* as at the *ninth hour*. And haſt thou long put off ſerious thoughts with reſpect to religion? Haſt thou long delayed to return to God? It is



)US COMMUNICANT.

t thou *awake*, that *thou attend to*
to thine everlaſting peace. God
t his hand all the day long, and
tes thee to his communion.
mpted to remove the difficulties
e oppreſſed who are commencing
to animate them to make farther
v addreſs a word to thoſe WHO
ER ON THE WAY, but who at
their fears, that their ſtate is not

and diſtreſſes cauſed by a ſenſe

to ſin.—Art thou often ſurpriſed into it, againſt thy will? and when thou falleſt into any tranſgreſſion, does not thy heart ſmite thee? Art thou not filled with diſtreſs? Canſt thou not appeal unto God, that thou haſt no greater deſire than to become more holy, and to have ſin more and more mortified? Doſt thou not often go, with thy heart ſinful and polluted as it is, to the Lord Jeſus, not barely that thou mayeſt obtain remiſſion through his blood, but that thou mayeſt alſo, by his holy Spirit, receive ſtrength to oppoſe ſin? Art thou not compelled to ſay, "O my "God! I cannot any longer ſupport a load ſo in- "tolerable. *My ſins are gone over my head, as an* "*heavy burden. They are too heavy for me.*"

And are not theſe exerciſes a full evidence that *ſin hath no more dominion* over thee, and that the principle of grace is in thy heart?

2. Art thou diſtreſſed becauſe of thine ignorance, becauſe thy knowledge of divine truths is circumſcribed within ſuch narrow bounds that thou canſt not, like others, converſe upon them with perſpicuity?

a. A conviction of this may produce a ſenſe of ſhame, but it ought not to lead thee to deſpond. It ſhould not operate as a cauſe of anxious diſtreſs, but as an excitement to thee to ſeek to increaſe in knowledge.

b. For thine encouragement we cannot but remark, that perhaps IN THY YOUTH, that precious ſeaſon for improvement, thou hadſt but little opportunity of making much proficiency in knowledge; and at the time, when GOD MANIFESTED himſelf to thy ſoul, ſuch was thy ſituation in life, that thou wert unable to make much progreſs in the

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ıy attain to ſalvation with a com-
egree of knowledge. The meaſure
vealed. If thou haſt an experi-
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s, whoſe knowledge is very exten-

dence that thou haſt never done it—that thou art yet in a graceleſs ſtate. A trembling hand, and an eye ſtreaming with tears, are peculiarly agreeable to God. Many a ſoul hath come to him, as it is ſaid the children of Iſrael ſhall come in the latter days, *fearing the Lord and his goodneſs.* Although Eſther approached the king with a fearful heart, and with ſentiments like theſe—*If I periſh, I periſh,* yet the ſceptre was reached out to her, and ſhe *found favour in the eyes of the king.* To draw near to God in ſuch a frame of ſoul, argues often a ſtronger faith than to come to him in the exerciſe of great joy. And afterwards God frequently ſhows, that ſuch an approach was pleaſing to him; as perhaps thou thyſelf mayeſt have experienced.

4. Art thou diſtreſſed, becauſe thy growth in grace is ſmall, compared even with thoſe who have been a much ſhorter time on the road than thou haſt been?

a. This circumſtance may, yea, ought to make thee more humble; nor is it matter of aſtoniſhment to us that thou art brought to a ſtand, and made to reaſon thus with thyſelf: "Am I truly in the way "to heaven? If I were, whence is it that I do not "advance more in the divine life? Surely there is "for me as well as for another, a fulneſs in Jeſus, to "enable me to bring forth much fruit." Make then careful ſearch whether the cauſe of not progreſſing is not with thyſelf, and let ſhame cover thy face on that account, in the preſence of thy God.

b. But it is ſometimes the effect of Jehovah's ſovereign determination, that one believer grows more in grace than another. It is in grace as it is in nature: One man more rapidly attains to his full growth than another. It does not unfrequently happen, that thoſe who are more advanced in life are

who are in their prime, both in
nd in ſtrength of mind. It is alſo
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e that thou art growing in grace
oſt imagine, although it be not ſo

way. But no ſooner does that flame decreaſe, than the ſoul appears ſtationary, and unable to progreſs in the ways of religion. But this is not mentioned with a view to diſhearten and diſcourage babes in Chriſt, but to warn them, on the one hand to be watchful over themſelves, to beware of backſliding, and to continue advancing in their heavenly courſe; and on the other hand, to ſet them on their guard againſt judging lightly of others. *Let him that ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall. Be not high-minded, but fear.*

5. Or doſt thou ſay,—Once I was aſſured of my being in the faith; but now I walk in darkneſs, and on this account I fear that my former experiences were imaginary; for had they been genuine, God would now have manifeſted himſelf to my ſoul?—This difficulty may proceed from ignorance; for nothing is more common than for God to deal differently with his people at different periods. Read the whole word of God, thou wilt ſee that at one time his people walk in darkneſs, at another in the light of God's countenance. It is the good pleaſure of our heavenly Father, that his children ſhould live by faith, not by ſenſe. Does it ſometimes happen that believers have their hearts enlarged, obtain views of their intereſt in Chriſt, and have the glories of heaven ſet before them? It is indeed a ſource of encouragement, but it is not a foundation on which they ſhould reſt. And has the Lord at ſome paſt period of thy life granted unto thee ſuch bright and delightful proſpects? And wert thou then convinced that the *work was done in truth?* It is ſtill a real work;—for *God is faithful.* But perhaps thou haſt not been ſufficiently careful to preſerve the light which then beamed upon thy ſoul, and thy walk

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countenance. Humble thyſelf
h, but let not thy confidence be
thou SEEST not, yet thou muſt

riſtian, diſtreſſed, and doſt thou
—becauſe like others thou canſt
ne when any remarkable eſſential
n thee, but from thy earlieſt youth
mpreſſions?—We obſerve

for glorious Chriſt? Is he not precious to thee, yea moſt precious? Doſt thou not often give him thy heart? And to evidence that thou art in earneſt; haſt thou not a ſincere deſire to live before him, and to devote all thy time and all thy powers to his ſervice?

Art thou compelled to confeſs that theſe are thine exerciſes? Thou haſt then, not the leaſt reaſon to doubt as to thy ſtate, or for a moment to be diſtreſſed concerning it. Praiſe thy God, and be grateful to him, for having inclined thee even from thy youth to purſue the things of religion.

7. Are others made to doubt of their ſtate, from the circumſtance—that the wicked proſper in the world, and that they have to paſs through life buffeting the ſtorms of adverſity. It was this which diſtreſſed the pious mind of Aſaph, Pſal. lxxiii. and there is as little ground for thee to be diſtreſſed on account of thoſe diſpenſations of Divine Providence as there was for him: For,

a. There are no truths more certain than theſe,—*that many are the afflictions of the righteous*, and *that whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth.* Yes, thoſe whom he moſt affectionately regards, are often called to the ſevereſt trials. By this the Eternal deſigns to wean them from the world, and to make their graces ſhine with brighter luſtre. And do infidels, and men whoſe principles are moſt looſe and abandoned, baſk beneath a proſperous ſun? Is it not often in wrath? At beſt their portion lies below—They know no other happineſs. Of this Aſaph was ſenſible, when he went into the ſanctuary of God. Believer—think it then no ſtrange thing, that thy Father viſiteth thee with the rod, and giveth thee chaſtiſing ſtrokes.

b. Doſt thou not often, in the very midſt of thine

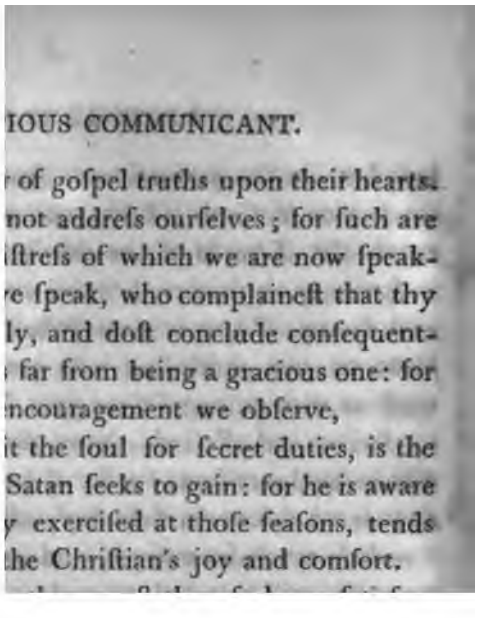
nce that the Eternal manifeſts his
ad that his power is put forth for
nd that at a time when all ſuccour
ou canſt ſee no way of eſcape.—
hat thy God *careth for thee;* that
upon thee, and that he will *never*
thee. Didſt thou but duly con-
ſo far from leading thee to an un-
ſion with reſpect to thy ſtate, thou
nore eſtabliſhed and confirmed in
ou art his child, and that he is thy

it not then a new caſe. If, when aſſailed by the grand adverſary of thy ſoul, blaſphemous thoughts are ſuggeſted,

b. Learn to diſtinguiſh between thoughts which immediately proceed from the heart, and thoſe fiery darts which Satan ſhoots into it. It is indeed true, that our hearts are wicked and depraved enough to produce the moſt ſinful thoughts, and hence it is difficult to make the propoſed diſtinction. However, it may be made.—Do thoſe ſinful thoughts overtake thee by ſurpriſe, when thy mind is employed on other ſubjects? When they ariſe, do they excite abhorrence? Do they diſpoſe thee to wreſtle and pray againſt them? Then, believe it—they are temptations from hell, and thou ſhouldſt view them more as SUFFERINGS and as SEVERE TRIALS, than AS SIN. But are the thoughts of which thou art complaining, idle, vain, worldly, inſomuch that thou art rendered by means of them unfit for holy duties, it is certainly an evidence of the exiſtence of indwelling corruptions, on account of which it becometh thee indeed to be humbled, but not to judge unfavourably with reſpect to thy ſtate—For the very act of ſeeing that in thy heart ſuch ſtrong corruptions obtain, and of groaning beneath a preſſure ſo great, are marks and ſtrong evidences of grace.

9. Art thou afraid, that thou art not ſincere in the profeſſions of religion which thou haſt made, becauſe when thou art engaged in ſecret duties thou art dull and lifeleſs, but when in company full of animation.

We grant, that this may produce great diſtreſs, and raiſe doubts in the mind—We grant that there are many hypocrites, who can ſpeak with an uncommon degree of accuracy and apparent ardour on the ſubjects of religion, but who at the ſame time never



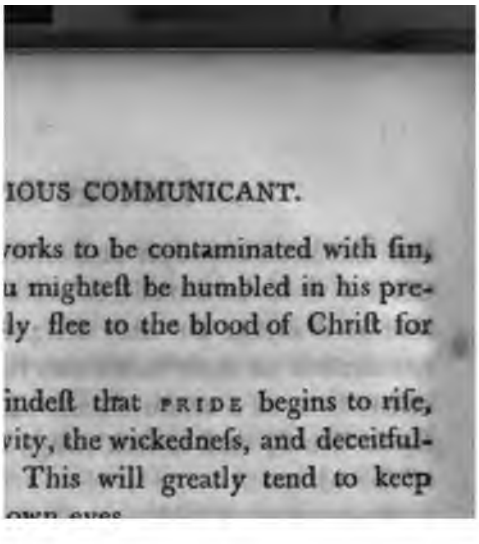
IOUS COMMUNICANT.

of goſpel truths upon their hearts.
not addreſs ourſelves; for ſuch are
iſtreſs of which we are now ſpeak-
e ſpeak, who complaineſt that thy
ly, and doſt conclude conſequent-
far from being a gracious one: for
ncouragement we obſerve,
it the ſoul for ſecret duties, is the
Satan ſeeks to gain: for he is aware
y exerciſed at thoſe ſeaſons, tends
he Chriſtian's joy and comfort.

kingdom, in the perſuaſion of ſinners to enter into the ſervice of God. With ſuch objects in view, he enters the Temple of the Moſt High; he engages in ſpeaking on themes the moſt intereſting, heavenly, and divine. Now, it pleaſes the Lord to elevate his heart, to animate his ſoul with zeal, and he delivers truth as with an angel's tongue; he ſees every auditor ſerious and affected. Now, Satan comes, enkindles in his heart ſome ſparks of pride: his language now is "a diſcourſe, delivered with ſuch animation, "with ſo much ſeriouſneſs, and with ſuch apparent "power, will not fail to endear me to the pious, "and cauſe my fame as a Preacher to extend far and "wide."—But does God give him grace to watch over his heart; does he perceive ſuch ſentiments ruſhing in upon his mind, he endeavours to reſiſt them, and will not harbour them even for a moment, being fully perſuaded that the glory of all belongs to God, and that from him proceeds any ability he may poſſeſs, to engage in the work of the Lord.

Thus we ſee that a perſon's views in acting may be pure, and at the ſame time ſinful motives may obtrude themſelves, if God himſelf give us not a heart to guard againſt them. But it is no ground on which thou oughteſt to conſider thy ſtate hopeleſs, even if thou ſhouldſt not find the motives of action ſuch as thou wouldſt wiſh. Doſt thou aſk then, "What muſt "I do? for it is this which keeps me back from "doing many things which I would otherwiſe per-"form."—We anſwer,

a. Leave not, on this account, any duty undone, which thou art convinced ought to be performed; for wert thou to delay the performance of duty until thou wert perfectly free from ſin, thou wouldſt never perform a ſingle good action. It hath pleaſed God



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

orks to be contaminated with ſin,
u mighteſt be humbled in his pre-
ly flee to the blood of Chriſt for

indeſt that PRIDE begins to riſe,
vity, the wickedneſs, and deceitful-
This will greatly tend to keep
own eyes

but this is an improper and erroneous idea: always believe it to be a truth, as has already been hinted, that convictions are only deſigned to make the ſinner confide no more in his own righteouſneſs, and to excite him, as a creature moſt vile and miſerable, to fly to Chriſt, and to ſeek refuge beneath the ſhadow of his wings.

Never then, Chriſtian, wiſh to have a greater, or more awful view of ſin, than will be inſtrumental in effecting this. O! if God were to ſet ſin before thine eyes in its true colours, the ſight would overcome thee: it is inſupportable by mortals.

b. Learn rightly to apprehend *the nature of faith.* This will prove of peculiar advantage to thee, in approaching the holy table of the Lord.

Faith appears to thee a grace which it is more arduous to exerciſe, than in fact it is. Thou canſt not conceive that to hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, to run, to fly to Jeſus, to receive him, to venture thy ſoul upon him, are acts by which perſons become really united to Chriſt, and are made partakers of ſalvation. For in thy conception, theſe are things which thou art enabled eaſily to perform; theſe are exerciſes in which thou art every day engaged.

But we ſolicit thee to examine the whole word of God, and ſee for thyſelf whether it be not fact, that the everlaſting ſalvation of a ſinner is connected with an hungering and thirſting after Chriſt, with a cordial reception of him in all his offices, and with looking ſolely, and ſteadfaſtly unto Jeſus.

Perhaps thou thinkeſt that faith muſt be a work which is meritorious, and equivalent to ſalvation.—To embrace a ſentiment of this kind, would be to hold that for truth, which lies directly out of the line of truth. Faith is no where repreſented as a

an inſtrument it be the hand that
ſalvation, yet it is a benefit of the
e. Acknowledge then, Chriſtian,
flows altogether from the rich, free
e of God. If thou couldſt only be
o believe that ſincere, ardent, and
ter Chriſt; that the laying of our-
creatures moſt unworthy to obtain
ands, was true and genuine faith,
ſt readily grant that thou waſt in
ſeeing theſe are more or leſs thine

BLESSED, perſons who are exactly of ſuch a deſcription.

2. We adviſe thee, as thou art again preparing to approach the holy ſupper of the Lord, to retire in ſecret, and reflecting on the paſt periods of thy life, to ſee whether thou canſt not recollect the time when thy heart was inflamed with love to God, and ardently longed after Jeſus; when petition upon petition was by thee preſented to the throne, and when thou wert able to devote thyſelf to him, as thy mighty redeemer. Doſt thou reply in the affirmative, and acknowledge that theſe have been thine exerciſes; but at the ſame time doſt thou add, "Theſe "were but momentary exerciſes; they laſted but for "a ſhort ſeaſon. I am now walking in darkneſs, "I am at a loſs what judgment to form with re- "ſpect to myſelf; I am fearful that, after all, I have "experienced nothing more than the COMMON gifts "of the ſpirit, of which the apoſtle ſpeaks ſo parti- "cularly," Heb. 6.

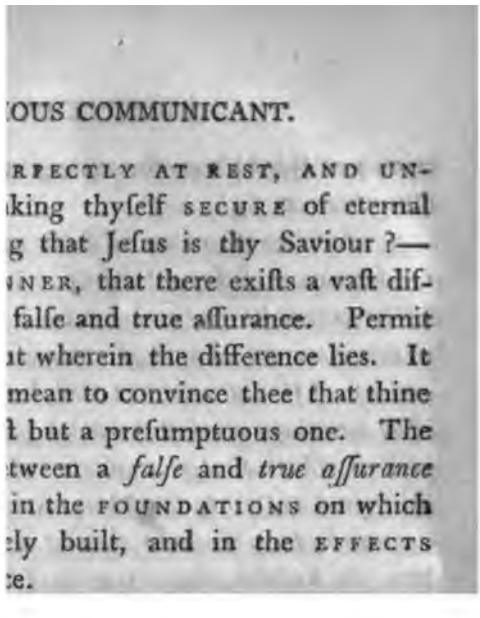
3. We therefore further adviſe thee to leave all thy former exerciſes where they are, without determining whether they be, or be not genuine, and contemplate theſe four things, viz.

a. The amazing and unſpeakable love of a triune God, which he diſplays in the ſalvation of ſinners.

b. The need thou haſt of Chriſt, his all-ſufficiency as a redeemer, and his preciouſneſs.

c. The free and gracious invitations of life and ſalvation which God has been pleaſed to make in the goſpel,

d. And that theſe are made TO ALL who live under its miniſtration, without excluding any, although they may have lived long in the commiſſion of ſins the moſt aggravated in their nature. We are



OUS COMMUNICANT.

RFECTLY AT REST, AND UN-
king thyſelf SECURE of eternal
g that Jeſus is thy Saviour?—
NER, that there exiſts a vaſt dif-
falſe and true aſſurance. Permit
it wherein the difference lies. It
mean to convince thee that thine
t but a preſumptuous one. The
tween a *falſe* and *true aſſurance*
in the FOUNDATIONS on which
ly built, and in the EFFECTS
e.

conſiders his beſt performances to be polluted, and altogether as *filthy rags*.

c. A falſe aſſurance is built alone on a deluſive confidence in *ſelf-righteouſneſs*. It cauſes not its poſſeſſor to forſake the ways of ſin. But that aſſurance which is of the true kind is founded upon the *righteouſneſs of Chriſt only*. Hence, he that has a genuine aſſurance, lays himſelf down at Jeſus' feet, he is ſtripped of all that righteouſneſs with which he once thought himſelf to be adorned. The precious Redeemer is now his only refuge, and whilſt he flies to him, he forſakes the old ways of ſin, and bids them an eternal adieu.

2. True and falſe aſſurance produce different effects.

a. A true aſſurance cauſes the believer ſeriouſly to reſolve *to live a more holy life, and to walk more tenderly before the Lord*. For his heart being purified by faith from the love of ſin, he is diſpoſed to put into practice all the duties of religion. His language is, " Are there ſo many great and precious promiſes " made to me, and the fulfilment of which in part at " leaſt I have experienced, and *ſhall I not perfect* " *holineſs in the fear of the Lord?*"

But a falſe aſſurance may always be known by this mark:—the poſſeſſor of it is *careleſs and inattentive to duty*. If he may arrive at heaven at laſt, and eſcape the miſeries of the bottomleſs pit, then all will be well. In the mean time, however, he feels not the leaſt inclination to walk in that *narrow way* which leads to the manſions of the juſt.

b. A true aſſurance *excites the heart to love God*. The aſſured Chriſtian admires, with adoring gratitude, that God has deſigned to look in mercy on one

ature is polluted and defiled with

nce has nothing of this. He who
lreſs himſelf with ſeeming fervour
rs, on the love of the Eternal to
an race; but in truth he feels not
love. His heart, whilſt he ſpeaks
nature ſo animating, remains per-

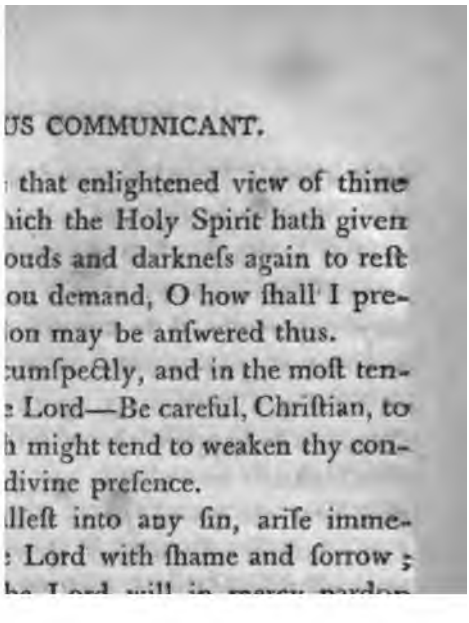
nce produces *humility of heart.*
ian lying low in the duſt will ex-
hy ſervant, and what thine hand-

at firſt not ſo eaſily to be attained, ſo he knows that it is difficult to be regained; as appears in the caſe of David, Pſalm li. But the perſon whoſe aſſurance is falſe and imaginary, as it did not coſt him much trouble to arrive at it, ſo he is not at much labour *to maintain* it. He always remains equally aſſured as at firſt.

Lay up, unconcerned and careleſs ſinner, theſe things in thy heart, and frequently make them the ſubjects of thy meditation. Scrutinize the foundation on which thy hopes are erected, and ſee if it will ſtand in the great day when all hearts ſhall be ſearched by that omniſcient eye, which pervades the moſt ſecret receſſes of the material and ſpiritual world. If thou haſt not the *ſure foundation* on which to reſt whilſt thou liveſt, thou mayeſt go on compoſedly enough, but in death thou wilt ſuddenly be overtaken by everlaſting perdition. Is it a work ſo arduous to adminiſter comfort to the redeemed of the Lord, who are labouring under their various trials? Canſt thou imagine that thou wilt ſo eaſily be aſſured, ſo quietly paſs down the ſtream of life, and land at laſt on the bliſsful ſhores of the celeſtial Paradiſe? O conſider with due attention the words of Peter—*If the righteous be ſcarcely ſaved, where will the ungodly and ſinner appear!*

But thou, child of God, whom God has ſo highly favoured, that thou haſt been enabled to believe with more than *common confidence*,—under what ſtrong, what inviolable obligations, art thou, to make ſome returns for that ſovereign, eternal, and unchangeable love, which he hath manifeſted to thee.

Doſt thou now walk in the light? Is all darkneſs diſpelled? With that care with which the bride preſerves the jewel, the pledge of her huſband's love, do



US COMMUNICANT.

that enlightened view of thine
hich the Holy Spirit hath given
ouds and darkneſs again to reſt
ou demand, O how ſhall I pre-
on may be anſwered thus.
umſpectly, and in the moſt ten-
e Lord—Be careful, Chriſtian, to
h might tend to weaken thy con-
divine preſence.
lleſt into any ſin, ariſe imme-
e Lord with ſhame and ſorrow;
he Lord will in mercy pardon

with them. Do they communicate to thee where their wounds bleed, and where moſt their burdens preſs? It behoves thee, who art aſſured of thine own converſion, *to ſtrengthen thy brethren;* for in thine own experience thou knoweſt that it is not ſo eaſy as ſome imagine to arrive at an aſſured confidence.

Finally, Chriſtian, go on thy way rejoicing; and ſhould it ſo happen, that thy light be obſcured, and that darkneſs and clouds reſt upon thee, remember, that now the people of God are engaged in a warfare; but that the time is drawing nigh when thou, with all the redeemed, ſhall ſhine in the brightneſs of the ſun of righteouſneſs, and, by that light divine, behold the God of thy ſalvation *eye to eye and face to face,* and without interruption enjoy him for ever and ever.

AMEN.

THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture V.

ON THE LIFE OF FAITH.

HAVING, in the two former lectures, ſpoken of the aſſurance of faith, and attempted to remove thoſe difficulties which prevent the people of God from attaining to a ſteadfaſt confidence of their intereſt in the merits of the bleſſed Redeemer, we proceed, in the preſent lecture, to endeavour to excite thoſe who have aſſurance to that LIFE OF FAITH which encourages, animates, and cauſes them to rejoice, as they purſue their journey to the heavenly Canaan.

In doing this, THREE things muſt be attempted:

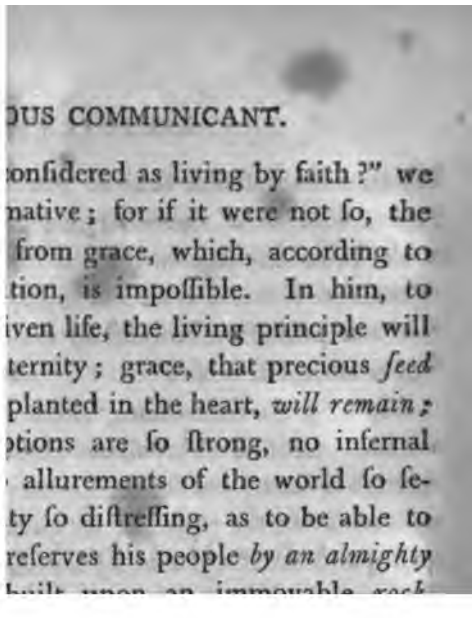
I. To ſhew in what the life of faith conſiſts.

II. To excite the people of God to aſpire after a more lively exerciſe of faith.

III. To point out to them the means of advancing in the divine life.

Firſt, then, we ſhall ſhew wherein the life of faith conſiſts. Previouſly however to this, it is proper to remark,

1. That if it be aſked, "Whether a believer, even "in a ſtate of the greateſt declenſion and back-

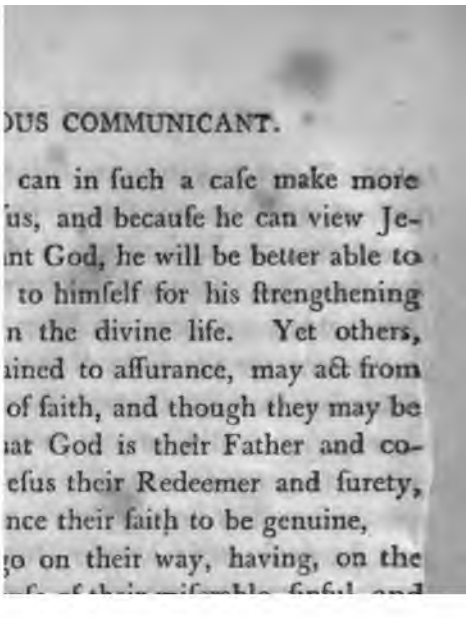

DUS COMMUNICANT.

onſidered as living by faith?" we
native; for if it were not ſo, the
from grace, which, according to
tion, is impoſſible. In him, to
iven life, the living principle will
ternity; grace, that precious *ſeed*
planted in the heart, *will remain*;
ptions are ſo ſtrong, no infernal
allurements of the world ſo ſe-
ty ſo diſtreſſing, as to be able to
reſerves his people *by an almighty*

feſt that he poſſeſſes faith? This was the caſe with Peter, who three times denied his Lord; but becauſe Jeſus *had prayed* for him, his *faith failed not.* Wherefore it was a common ſaying with Auguſtine, "When profeſſion languiſhed on his lips, then love "glowed in his heart."

Although, at ſuch times, there may not appear to our view ſatisfactory evidence that the ſoul is in the exerciſe of faith, yet faith is in the heart, and affords no inconſiderable proof of its exiſtence, by its hungering and thirſting, and by its earneſt deſires of deliverance from this lifeleſs ſtate. Such a Chriſtian ſtrikingly reſembles a tree in the midſt of winter. It cannot eaſily be diſtinguiſhed from the dead trees, among which it may be placed; but the roots being found, as ſoon as the earth is viſited by the refreſhing ſhowers and warming rays of a vernal ſun, it diſcovers ſigns of life. Or he may be compared to a perſon apparently at the point of death, in whom no ſigns of life are diſcovered, excepting now and then a diſtreſſing gaſp; but afterwards, when he recovers, it is manifeſt that the vital principle had not entirely forſaken him. The Chriſtian alſo may be reduced to ſo low a ſtate as to be in doubt whether ſpiritual life has ever been imparted to him; but when God afterwards invigorates it, then he clearly perceives that God had awakened him into life by his divine and ſpiritual influences.

2. If it be aſked, "Whether aſſurance be *eſſential* "to a life of faith, that is, whether a child of God "may have no certainty of his being in the faith, and "yet really live in the exerciſe of it?" We reply, It is true, when a perſon knows aſſuredly that he has fellowſhip with God, and an intereſt in Chriſt, he is under greater advantages for exerciſing faith in a

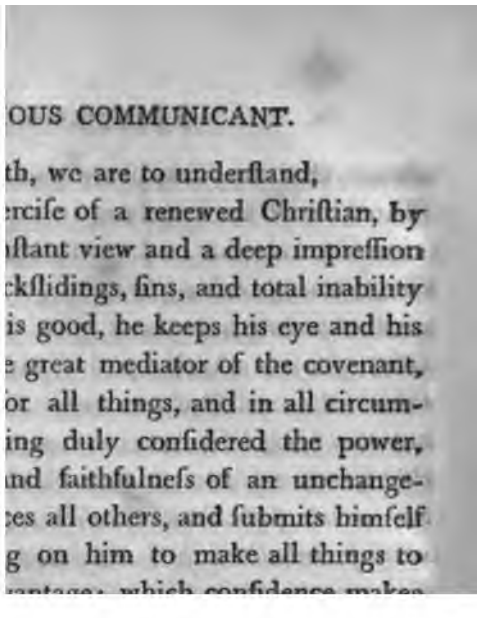


D. Yes, it may happen, that perſons who are not aſſured, may exerciſe faith in a higher degree, than ſome who may have a higher degree of confidence; for the latter, walking in the light, find it eaſy to believe: but how many are there who walk in darkneſs; who are, both by day and by night, ſorely diſtreſſed, that ſtill cleave to Chriſt, and believe even *againſt hope*. Did not the woman of Canaan exerciſe ſtronger faith than the blind ſon of Timeus? the former was ſeveral times repulſed by Chriſt; yet ſhe perſevered: but the latter received a gracious call, to come immediately to him, and was addreſſed: *Be of good comfort, riſe*, he calleth thee.

Thus much we have thought proper to remark, both for the encouragement of the mourning children of Zion, who are afraid of cheriſhing a thought that they have faith, and yet at the ſame time give many evidences that they are in poſſeſſion of that divine and gracious principle; and to quicken them in the great duty of living by faith.

Having premiſed theſe things, we now come to the ſubject itſelf,— THE LIFE OF FAITH. Thus, the courſe of God's people, whilſt travelling heavenward is denominated. The prophet ſays, "*The juſt ſhall live by his faith;* and the apoſtle of the Gentiles exhorts, *as ye have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk in him;* that is, walk in ſuch a manner as when ye received Chriſt at firſt, namely by faith. The ſame apoſtle declared to the church in Galatia, *The life which I live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;* and again, *we walk by faith, not by ſight*, 2. Cor. v. 7.

We ſhall FIRST deſcribe this life of faith, and then enlarge on the particular parts of the deſcription.



OUS COMMUNICANT.

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is good, he keeps his eye and his
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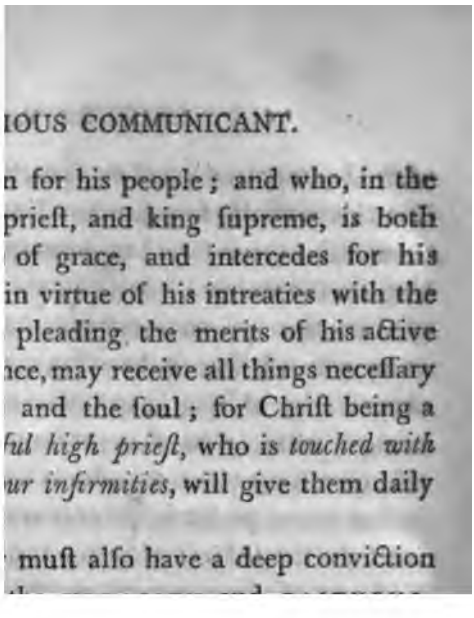
es all others, and ſubmits himſelf
g on him to make all things to

cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults. Pſalm. xix. 12. To this muſt be ſubjoined,

2. An habitual and conſtant acknowledgment of the ſoul's *total inability in itſelf.* For, though in regeneration a principle of grace is implanted in the heart, yet it is a truth, and the daily experience of the children of God confirms the obſervation, *that without* Jeſus, the believer *can do nothing.* Paul, though an apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, confeſſed, that *he was not ſufficient of himſelf to think any thing as of himſelf, but all his ſufficiency was of God,* 2 Cor. iii. 5. Not one duty can be performed, not one ſin can be overcome, not one temptation can be reſiſted, without the influence and power of God; and the more this truth is impreſſed on the mind, the better it is prepared for the exerciſe of faith; for as ſoon as a perſon begins to think that he can do ſome things, by an exertion of his own ſtrength, then faith muſt neceſſarily become weaker; then the ſoul, in the ſame degree, loſes ſight of God and Chriſt. Then he may be viewed as ſtanding on dangerous ground: Peter relied on his own ſtrength, and denied his maſter.

3. Again, it is ſuppoſed that the believer always KEEPS THE LORD JESUS in his eye, as one ALL-SUFFICIENT, ABLE AND WILLING to help his people in all their needs; that he acknowledges him to be *the fountain of life,* from whoſe fulneſs he *receives, and grace for grace,* which is ſufficient to enrich the poor, to fill the empty, and to render happy the miſerable; *the mighty God who is able to give abundantly above what we are able to aſk or think; the complete Redeemer* who, by his ſufferings and death, hath obtained all bleſſings for believing ſinners; and by bringing in *an everlaſting* righteouſneſs, hath ſatisfied divine juſtice, and procured



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

n for his people; and who, in the
prieſt, and king ſupreme, is both
of grace, and intercedes for his
in virtue of his intreaties with the
pleading the merits of his active
ıce, may receive all things neceſſary
and the ſoul; for Chriſt being a
ful high prieſt, who is *touched with*
ur infirmities, will give them daily

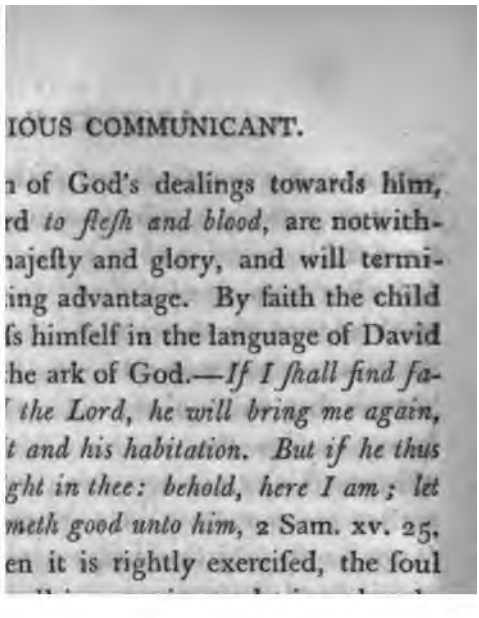
muſt alſo have a deep conviction

and OPPOSITION of their ſpiritual enemies induces them continually to call upon Jeſus as THEIR KING, to erect his throne in their hearts, to keep within due bounds the power of their adverſaries, and to impart to them ſtrength to withſtand their aſſaults. Yes, in every act, whether it be of a temporal or ſpiritual nature, they wiſh to keep their eye fixed on Jeſus, being ſenſible that they are not only unable, but alſo unwilling to do any thing acceptable to God.

But as we purpoſe, in another lecture, to treat at large on the ſubject of faith's application of the great mediator of the covenant, we ſhall not, in this place, be more particular, but proceed to remark,

2. That the ſecond act of the life of faith conſiſts *in a holy, humble, reverential, and obedient ſubmiſſion to the will of God.* This is accompanied with a renunciation of the believer's own will and inclinations.

A. The believer is ſubmiſſive and obedient TO THE DECRETIVE WILL OF GOD. Whatever be the divine purpoſes concerning him, he is ſilent and adores. In darkneſs and in light, in proſperity and adverſity, in joy and in ſorrow, he reveres the ways of God as wiſe, holy, and good, and ſays with Job, "*The Lord* "*performeth the thing that is appointed for me,*" Job "xxiii. 14. God will not, to accommodate himſelf "to my wiſhes, change his counſels; and therefore "it is my ſincere deſire to follow him in all his deal-"ings with me." The language of his heart is, *Father, thy will be done.* Corrupt nature may indeed ſometimes repine at the providences of God, becauſe he often leads his people in dark and dreary paths; but faith oppoſes its rebellious murmurs, and makes the Chriſtian call upon his ſoul, "*Wait thou upon* "*God,*" Pſal. lxii. 6. It leads him to conſider what

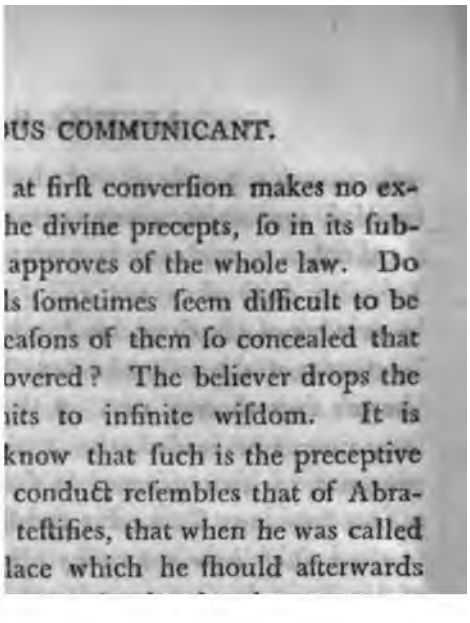


IOUS COMMUNICANT.

n of God's dealings towards him,
rd *to flesh and blood*, are notwith-
najesty and glory, and will termi-
ing advantage. By faith the child
s himself in the language of David
he ark of God.—*If I shall find fa-*
the Lord, he will bring me again,
t and his habitation. But if he thus
ght in thee: behold, here I am; let
meth good unto him, 2 Sam. xv. 25.
en it is rightly exercised, the soul

wills that his people *be not ſlothful in buſineſs, but ſteadfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

b. But faith does not reſt ſatisfied with a bare knowledge of the divine will. The believer is ſenſible that not the man who only knows, but he who likewiſe does the will of God, is bleſſed; and at the ſame time is perſuaded, that a faith which is not accompanied with obedience to the divine precepts, is not acceptable to God. He therefore makes the work of the Lord his daily employment. In the integrity of his heart he ſays with Iſrael, " *All that the Lord* " *hath ſaid unto us, we will do,*" Exod. xxiv. 7. He is determined, on THE ONE HAND, through grace, to do nothing which his covenant God hath forbidden. He often thus reaſons with himſelf: " I have " given myſelf to be the Lord's for ever—I am no " longer my own but his; and therefore I muſt and I " will renounce and avoid, as my Father ſhall ena- " ble me, all that he has forbidden in his law. For " if I were to obſerve a different conduct, diſregard " his commands, join with the world in their pur- " ſuits of pleaſure, and go with them the round of " amuſements,—the Eternal, who does not leave un- " noticed any conduct of his people, muſt ceaſe to " view me as one of his ſervants. An inſpired pen- " man hath ſaid, " *The foundation of the Lord ſtand-* " *eth ſure, the Lord knoweth them that are his. Let* " *him that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from all* " *iniquity.* And hence I now wage an eternal war with " thee, O ſin. Thy ways are oppoſed to thoſe of " my Father, my God, my Redeemer, my All!"—— And, on THE OTHER HAND, the believer will ſeek in all things to do what God hath commanded, how much ſoever the carnal principle may be otherwiſe



)US COMMUNICANT.

at firſt converſion makes no ex-
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overed? The believer drops the
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know that ſuch is the preceptive
conduct reſembles that of Abra-
teſtifies, that when he was called
lace which he ſhould afterwards

AND WELL-GROUNDED CONFIDENCE IN GOD, in all things, whether temporal or ſpiritual.

A. This confidence is maintained in ALL SPIRITUAL DISTRESSES.

a. Under a ſenſe of his having backſlidden; and in the experience of the power of corruptions. Such doubts indeed may ariſe in the believer's mind as may make him ready to ſay, "A ſtate like this is inconſiſtent with grace. If God were my Father, and Jeſus my Redeemer and ſurety, ſin would not exert ſuch power in me. If Chriſt dwelt in my heart, it would be more purified." But even in the midſt of them, he loſes not his confidence in God. For has he not been taught to know God as one that is *gracious, merciful, and abundant* in goodneſs; and has he not experienced the virtue of the blood of Chriſt to cleanſe and to purify? He is encouraged therefore with David to pray, *Have mercy* upon me, *O God, according to thy loving kindneſs: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my tranſgreſſions*, Pſal. li. 1. He then conſiders the divine COMPASSION, and makes it another ground of his truſt. "Thou art," ſays he, "a God who will pardon my ſins, and deign to pity me, *as a father pitieth* his *children. For thou knoweſt* our frames, thou remembereſt that we are duſt, Pſal. ciii. 13, 14. Haſt thou not declared with thine own mouth? *I, even I, am he that blotteth out all thy tranſgreſſions for my name's ſake, and will not remember thy ſins*; ſurely, as a GOD OF TRUTH, thou wilt not fail of performing THIS word which thou haſt ſpoken."— But this is not all; he will plead the atonement of Jeſus, he will reſt upon his righteouſneſs, and derive ſupport from this fruitful ſource of encouragement, that he *ever liveth to make inter-*

himſelf that the Father, for the
ſuch a mediator, will not wholly
r for ever caſt him from his pre-

naintains this confidence *under*
hen the Lord withholds the light
from him, hides his face, ſtands
wall, and makes him to bewail
'My ſtrength and my hope is
Lord," Lam. iii. 18. and with
h forſaken me, and my Lord hath

for the trial of his people's faith, viſit them with ſickneſs, or poverty, or bring them into any other afflictive circumſtances? Is there nothing but darkneſs on every ſide, without any proſpect of relief? Are the ways in which they once expected deliverance obſtructed? Do the clouds ſtill thicken and cover their path with impenetrable gloom? Be it ſo; yet the believer does not give up his confidence, but *truſts in the name of the Lord, and ſtays upon his God,* in the following manner:

a. He looks off from himſelf, from all creatures, and from all means on which he once depended; and ſeeing them to be all vain and ineffectual, betakes himſelf to God as his refuge, and caſts all his concerns, and all his burdens at his feet, acknowledging that his help and deliverance is alone in the Lord; that it is he who bringeth light out of darkneſs, and that nothing is impoſſible with him: and hence, he commits his way to Jehovah, that he may order it, and ſaith, "*Thou beholdeſt miſchief and ſpite, to requite it with thy hand:*" and it has been often found, that the more dark the Providence, the ſtronger has been the believer's confidence, that the Lord was near to help and to deliver. He has, in times paſt, either experienced this himſelf, or obſerved it to be ſo in God's dealings with others, and this makes him to *believe, even againſt hope,* both that the Eternal can, and will bring ſalvation.

b. This believing confidence manifeſts itſelf in times of afflictions, by cauſing the Chriſtian to have his eye fixed upon SPIRITUAL, heavenly, and inviſible objects.— "O!" ſaith the believer, "in this life "I am travelling a dark road, every thing goes "againſt me: however if I have but a ſmall por- "tion of this world's goods, I have an inheritance in

"heaven, which is more durable and far better. My "ſoul expects an eternal ſalvation, and waits to be "put into poſſeſſion of celeſtial treaſures; theſe far "tranſcend the trifles of time; and therefore I "regard not things *which are ſeen*. They are tem-"poral, mutable, inconſtant, unſatisfactory; but I "look at thoſe which *are not* ſeen, which are eternal, "and which render the poſſeſſor of them happy."

"I am but a ſtranger on earth; my country is "above, and though now I dwell not *with the Lord*, "yet to him my eye is directed, my heart and my "*converſation are in heaven*, and I have a believing "expectation, that my God will, in his own good "time, conduct me thither, there eternally to poſſeſs "and enjoy the inheritance my Jeſus purchaſed for "me, at the immenſe price of his own moſt precious "blood."

c. This believing confidence diſcovers itſelf IN A PATIENT WAITING FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE DIVINE promiſes, eventhough the period of their accompliſhment be remote, and God delay to bring deliverance. This is, in the ſtyle of Scripture, *to believe*, and *not to make haſte*, or, in other words, *to believe that he is faithful* who promiſes. Such is the truſt which the church is repreſented as having repoſed in Zion's God: *I will look unto the Lord; I* will wait for the God of my ſalvation; *my God will hear me*, Micah vii. 7. Thus, too, Abraham patiently waited upon God, and exerciſed a confidence in his promiſes; for when he was ſeventy-five years of age, God declared that he ſhould have a ſon by Sarah: the accompliſhment of that divine word was poſtponed to his hundredth year; ſtill he truſted, though the event appeared moſt unlikely to take place. It is ſaid of him, *that he ſtaggered not at the promiſe of*

God, through unbelief, but was ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully perſuaded that what he had promiſed, he was able to perform, Rom. iv. 20, 21.— And Paul teſtifies of the pious Patriarchs, that although they *had not received* the promiſes of poſſeſſing the land of Canaan, *they were perſuaded of them,* embraced them, and died believing that the promiſed event would take place; and the Apoſtle notices it as an evidence of their confident expectation, that they might have returned to the land of their fathers; but *now* they *deſire a better country,* Heb. xi. 13.— Thus does the ſoul that truſts in the Lord conduct itſelf, though it ſee not the event, it ſtill waits for it, with that patience which removes all the obſtacles that unbelief caſts in the way: appearances may be diſcouraging; God may defer the period of fulfilling his word; yet the believer will not give up his hold; but, as the huſbandman waiteth patiently for the harveſt, ſo *will he wait for the Lord:* in whatever circumſtances he is placed, he does not indulge a painful anxiety, to know what may be the iſſue of things, but commits all to the direction of God, who orders every event. No tongue can expreſs, no language deſcribe how comfortable, how delightful it is to follow where Jeſus leads, as a child follows his father! Is the child of God led in thorny paths, and made to drink of the bitter cup of affliction? or is he made to lie down *in green paſtures beſide the ſtill waters* of comfort? all is well, becauſe it is the appointment of God; and this conſideration is ſufficient to beget an holy unconcern.

4. The life of faith diſcovers itſelf in THAT HOLY COURAGE by which the believer OPPOSES ALL HIS ENEMIES, till, through divine aſſiſtance, he obtains a complete victory. He is, indeed, ſenſible of his own

ge in this ſpiritual warfare; but he
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its perſecutions, ſcoffings, contempt, or its various ſeductions? by faith he overcomes the world, and reſts on the promiſe of the glorious Redeemer, "*In "the world, ye ſhall have tribulation; but be of good "cheer, I have overcome the world,*" John xvi. 33.— By faith, with Moſes, he eſteems *the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures of Egypt; for he has reſpect to the recompenſe of reward.* Heb. xi. 26.— Faith makes him confeſs that all that the world preſents to its votaries, are, at beſt, but temporal bleſſings; whilſt thoſe which Jeſus preſents to his followers, are durable and eternal; that the former conſtitute an inſufficient portion, that cannot ſatisfy the heart; whilſt the latter form a ſtore-houſe of bleſſings, all of which afford comfort to the ſoul in life, in death, and throughout an endleſs eternity. Hence the Chriſtian is induced to deſpiſe the honours, the pleaſures, and the riches of the world, when ſet over againſt the delights and conſolations which he enjoys in the communion of his God.

5. The perſon who lives by faith, *daily* ENGAGES IN THE PRACTICE *of true godlineſs*, and endeavours to do all things, whether of a religious or civil nature, in a right manner, and to a right end.

A. We have aſſerted, "that the perſon who lives by "faith, daily engages in the practice of true godlineſs," and it is a fact; for faith is the root whence genuine godlineſs ſprings, and by faith it is exhibited in a holy walk and converſation.

a. The believer ſeeks to advance in DIVINE KNOWLEDGE; for, as faith is built upon the teſtimony of God, that teſtimony muſt be well known, if faith ſhall remain ſteadfaſt. Hence the believer is not ſatisfied with having the firſt principles of reli-

but he preſſes forward to perfection,
pon the divine declaration, "*Then*
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Hence the Apoſtle ſpeaks of faith,
Gal. v. 6. Love diſcovers the

praiſes of God be upon the tongue of every believer, for bleſſings of a ſpiritual nature; and if it delight him thus to glorify the Eternal as the beneficent giver of all things reſpecting the ſoul, think not that he is unmindful of the temporal bounties which his Father may have beſtowed upon him. He beholds his reconciled God dealing them out to him; he conſiders them alſo to be benefits which his Redeemer hath purchaſed for him, and therefore to expreſs the gratitude with which his heart is filled, *he preſents his ſoul and body a living ſacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God.*

d. Faith is the fruitful parent of GODLY FEAR. For although it be true, that by faith the Chriſtian is admitted to fellowſhip with God, and may hold an intercourſe with him as a reconciled Father, and a covenant God; yet becauſe he has been taught, that the Eternal *is high and lifted up, and dwelleth in light inacceſſible and full of glory, and that he is holy, righteous, omniſcient; the King of kings, and Lord of lords,* infinitely *exalted above all creatures;* he is impreſſed with a deep ſenſe of the ſplendor which ſurrounds his throne, and of the glory of his majeſty, and this makes him circumſpect in his walk; ſo that on the one hand, he would do nothing to diſpleaſe him, and on the other hand, is diſpoſed to do every thing in order to obtain his divine approbation. This holy fear of God, leads the Chriſtian to adapt to himſelf the language of JOB, "*Deſtruction* "*from God was a terror to me, and by reaſon of his* "*highneſs I could not endure,*" Job xxxi. 23.—And of JOSEPH—"*How then can I do this great wickedneſs,* "*and ſin againſt God,*" Gen. xxxix. 9.—Thus *he ſerves the Lord with fear, and rejoices with trembling.*

e. Faith produces the fruit OF LOVE TO OUR

mercy, and daily experiencing how far he comes ſhort of the glory of God, he is made to cry out with Job; "*I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes,*"—Job. xlii.

Hence it is that believers are not only afraid of commending their performances, but are compelled to acknowledge that their beſt actions are defiled with ſin, if they be not ſprinkled with the purifying blood of Chriſt; and whatever good they ſee in themſelves, they aſcribe to free grace, ſaying, "By the "grace of God we are what we are."

h. Faith has alſo an influence upon TRANSACTIONS IN CIVIL LIFE: it makes the believer keep his eye ſteadfaſtly fixed upon God in all his temporal affairs; it leads him to enter upon nothing without looking to him for his direction and bleſſing. Faith keeps him from murmuring when things go apparently againſt him, and produces thankfulneſs in proſperity. Faith enables him in all doubtful matters to chooſe the ſafeſt way; that is, rather to abſtain from what is lawful, than to extend his Chriſtian liberty too far, and wound his brother. He follows the example of the apoſtle, who though for himſelf, he had freedom to eat fleſh, yet would rather deny himſelf that privilege, than lay a ſtumbling-block in his brother's way.

B. But is faith ſo productive of acts of piety? It alſo directs to a performance of them in a RIGHT MANNER, and to a RIGHT END.

a. In a right MANNER, according to the preſcription of the word of God, which always muſt be the rule of our actions. By faith the believer is led firſt to attend above all things, to the concerns of the ſoul, and then to thoſe which are neceſſary for our temporal comfort; and not only ſo, but to perform

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ht END, to glorify God in all
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) pleaſe either himſelf or others,
) make the approbation of God
at aim ; and this principle carries

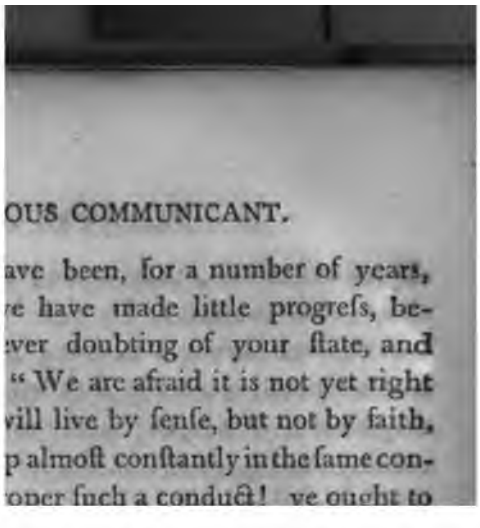
7. Laſtly, faith is employed in the CONTEMPLATION of the objects of ſenſe in ſuch a manner as to lead to thoſe which are SPIRITUAL and DIVINE. For inſtance; Does the believer caſt his eye upon the *ſun of nature?* his mind is immediately led to inveſtigate the glories of the ſun of righteouſneſs; Does he behold the *plants* and flowers in all their *beauty* and *elegance?* the eye of faith will trace all theſe to the hand that made them, and the believer will have his ſoul impreſſed with this important truth, that thus too he ought to grow, and bring forth fruit unto God. Does he view the heavens in all their ſplendor? his mind is inſtantaneouſly elevated to the THIRD HEAVEN, the ſeat of joy and everlaſting ſalvation. In a word, whatever he beholds, whatever he does, raiſes his ſoul to things inviſible and ſpiritual.

See thus what it is to live by faith.

We have, in as conciſe a manner as poſſible, delineated the whole walk of a Chriſtian, to the end that every one who looks upon the beautiful picture might be enamoured with it.

We muſt now, in the SECOND place, endeavour TO EXCITE AND URGE the people of God, TO PROCEED in their journey to heaven, walking by faith; for, although this road be ſo charming and delightful, and at the ſame time ſo neceſſary to be purſued; yet there are many of the children of God, that travel it with a ſlothful and ſluggiſh ſtep.

O PEOPLE OF GOD, what reaſon have ye to be *aſhamed!* Ye live, it is true, by faith, for without faith, ye could never enjoy fellowſhip with God, ſince that divine principle is the bond which unites you to him. But where is your ardor, your activity, your engagedneſs in the exerciſe of faith?



OUS COMMUNICANT.

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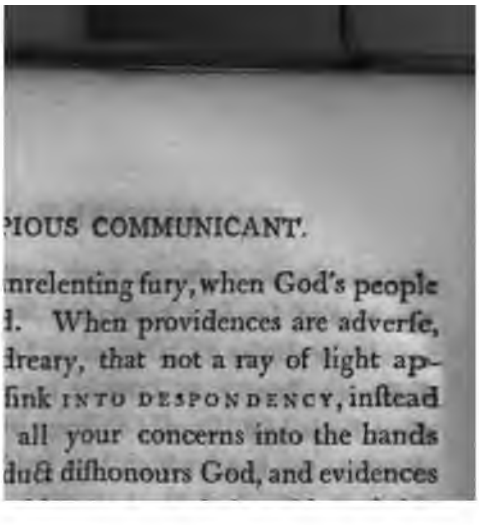
p almoſt conſtantly in the ſame con-
oper ſuch a conduct! ye ought to

do indeed confeſs, that *without Chriſt ye can do nothing*; but conſtantly by faith to look to him for wiſdom and ſtrength in every tranſaction, ſpiritual and temporal, is a thing with which ye are but little acquainted. When, depending on yourſelves, ye have ventured to engage in buſineſs, or duty, without looking for direction and influence from above, how often have ye been put to ſhame? whilſt, on the other hand, when deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of your own inſufficiency, ye could only lift your eye to God for help, ye have found his grace *ſufficient for you, and his ſtrength made perfect in your weakneſs.*— All this is deſigned to teach you to look from ſecond cauſes, and to live by faith. Yet where is that believing and CALM SUBMISSION to the will of God? Every thing goes well, when the ſun of proſperity beams upon you, when you can *waſh your ſteps in butter*; but when the clouds of adverſity gather thick around you, and horrid gloom darkens your way, how are your hearts diſpoſed to murmur! Does God call you to part with ſomething that is dear to you? you are not, like Abraham, willing to offer up your Iſaac. It may indeed be your wiſh to be in ſuch a frame; but, O how hard is it for you to yield a tacit ſubmiſſion to the will of God!

In times of ſpiritual or temporal diſtreſs, in what do you evidence the exerciſe of CONFIDENCE? Does God hide his face from you, do all things appear TO GO AGAINST YOU? ye are caſt down, unbelief gains ſtrength, ye are afraid to rely upon the promiſes, or to conſider God as your father. Does SATAN beſet you with his fiery darts? ye take not the *ſhield of faith*, to ward them off; but are diſmayed: fear gets hold of you, and ye dare not oppoſe him.— However, remember your enemy is ever on the watch,



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nrelenting fury, when God's people
d. When providences are adverſe,
dreary, that not a ray of light ap-
ſink INTO DESPONDENCY, inſtead
all your concerns into the hands
duct diſhonours God, and evidences

IN HOLINESS; for, as faith purifies the heart from the love of ſin, ſo it makes the ſoul zealouſly engage in all the duties of religion.— Faith teaches its poſſeſſor conſtantly to keep in mind his inability, and thus leads him fixedly to keep his eye upon Chriſt. Faith is the hand which lays hold of Chriſt, and his ſtrength. By faith the believer runs after Chriſt, and brings the empty veſſel of his heart to an all-ſufficient God and Saviour, to be filled. Have ye then any deſires of becoming more holy; let faith be much in exerciſe: it is the beſt mean which can be employed, in order to ſatisfy thoſe deſires.

3. By exerciſing faith, we ſhall be able, in the name and ſtrength of the Lord, to make a noble, manly, and bold STAND againſt all that oppoſe us. By faith we are taught to expect oppoſition; but by faith too we are enabled to lay our hands upon the promiſes, the oath and the faithfulneſs of God, and humbly plead them before him. By faith, we look upon Chriſt as the captain of ſalvation, and ſtrengthened by his power, in the midſt of the combat, we may triumphantly exclaim, "*In all theſe things, we* "*are more than conquerors, through him that hath* "*loved us.*"

4. Faith enables the Chriſtian to go on his way, replete with joy and comfort; for

A. As the believing ſoul is not eaſily ſhaken as to its ſtate, ſo it can rejoice in having fellowſhip with God, and in all the bleſſings which flow from it.— Yes, believers, ye *can rejoice in the hope of glory.*

B. In PROSPERITY, faith makes the Chriſtian truly grateful. He enjoys temporal bleſſings, confeſſing his unworthineſs of the leaſt favour, in the language of the venerable Patriarch, "I am leſs "than the leaſt of all thy mercies."— He is ſenſible

that, by faith, he has a covenant right to all he poſſeſſes; for he ſees that Chriſt, to whom faith unites his ſoul, hath purchaſed all theſe things for his people.

C. In ADVERSITY, when diſtreſſes and afflictions ariſe from every quarter, faith enables the ſoul to commit, with an holy unconcern, its all into the hands of a faithful God, who always careth for his children, and to reſt in the promiſes of him, who hath ſaid, "*I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee.*"

5. The walk of faith, not only affords a comfortable and a pleaſant life, but prepares the way for a JOYOUS AND BLESSED DEATH. In the lively exerciſe of faith, the ſoul with pleaſure contemplates its diſſolution from the body, as the appointed mean by which it ſhall be admitted to immediate communion with its God in heaven, where we ſhall ſee *eye to eye, and face to face*: on a death-bed, the believer may ſay with Jacob, "*I have waited for thy ſalvation, O Lord;*" and with Paul, "*I have kept the faith.*" It is true, God may in that hour withhold the light of his countenance; but it will only be to put faith to its laſt trial; and, even in that caſe, there ſtill remains a waiting upon the Lord; *for the righteous hath hope in his death.*

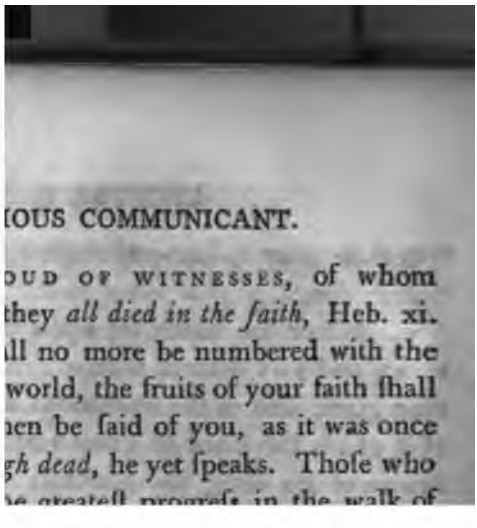
6. This ſtable walk of faith is ſtrongly recommended to you, by a conſideration of that CALM SERENITY of mind which it affords, on the occurrence of SUDDEN AND ALARMING EVENTS, reſpecting either yourſelves, your families, or the land in which you live; when unconverted ſinners ſhall fear and tremble, and flee into their *inner chamber*; and when thoſe who have but little faith, ſhall with Peter, and the reſt of the Apoſtles, cry out, "*Lord ſave us, we periſh.*" Matt. viii. 25. then ſhall ye, who are accuſtomed to commit yourſelves to God's

have boldneſs to fly unto him, as the rock of your ſalvation, and as your *ſtrong habitation, to which ye continually reſort.* Then ye may conſider yourſelves as ſafe in your father's hand, and depending on his faithfulneſs, ſay, "*I will truſt, and not be afraid;* "for the Lord is with me."

7. Such a walk of faith GLORIFIES GOD; for the believer depends upon him as a gracious and all-ſufficient God. To live by faith, makes us look from every other object but Chriſt, and to confide in him alone: faith humbles the proud heart, and cauſes us to think little of ourſelves. When we are brought to confeſs, that for all we have, we are indebted to free grace, ſaying with Paul, *By the grace of God,* we are what we are; then we will not prize our virtues, nor ſet a high value on our beſt performances. If a believer does any thing for God, or his cauſe, he aſcribes it not to himſelf, but to the *grace of God* which *dwelleth* in him; and as he receives every thing from God, ſo, by faith, he is diſpoſed to render back unto him, all the praiſe, and all the glory.

8. People of God, ought ye not to be deſirous of leading ſuch a life of faith, when ye conſider that it is THE MEDIUM through which EVERY BLESSING comes? By faith *ye have acceſs* to the throne of grace, where you may commit all your concerns to your father, God; by faith ye *receive* out *of his fulneſs, and grace for grace;* by faith ye have a RIGHT to all temporal bleſſings, even though ye poſſeſs them not, and are poor and deſpiſed by the world; ſpiritual bleſſings, eternal felicity, ye may conſider as yours; yes, by faith Jeſus dwells in your hearts, and your hearts in heaven, even now, whilſt ye ſojourn below.

9. Do ye, Chriſtians, live here by faith? ye ſhall have the HONOUR after death, of being enrolled



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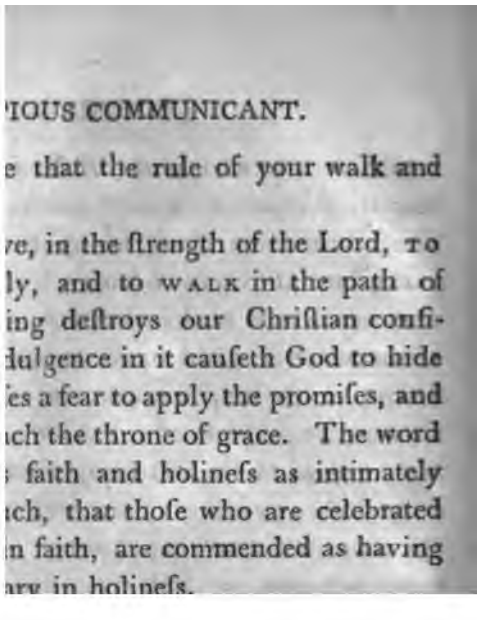
OUD OF WITNESSES, of whom
they *all died in the faith*, Heb. xi.
ll no more be numbered with the
world, the fruits of your faith ſhall
ıen be ſaid of you, as it was once
gh dead, he yet ſpeaks. Thoſe who

" *to make your calling and election ſure; for if ye do* " *theſe things, ye ſhall never fall.*"

2. Be not too much ſet upon having your COMFORT and JOY derived from a FEELING ſenſe of divine grace, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit. If it pleaſe the Lord to grant you thoſe ſenſible evidences of his love, be thankful; highly prize, and carefully preſerve them; but if ye have not theſe experiences, conſider that now ye are not ſo much called to feel as to believe; the former is tranſitory, but the latter remains when feelings ceaſe; the one produces a tender, ſteadfaſt walk, but the other renders it wavering and unſteady. As long as a perſon has a feeling of the love of God, he conceives that hills and mountains muſt fall before him, and ſays, " I " ſhall never be moved;" but does he loſe this feeling ſenſe, the leaſt unfavourable circumſtance alarms him, and he is ready to give up all for loſt. But faith continues though midnight darkneſs reſt upon us. By believing, we keep a faſt hold of the word and promiſes, and thus temptations of every kind loſe much of their power.

3. Devote a part of every day IN SEARCHING the Scriptures; it is neceſſary for Chriſtians to add conſtantly to their ſtock of knowledge. Faith is ſtrong in proportion to one's acquaintance with divine truths; ignorance is the parent of unbelief. If a perſon be but little verſed in the Scriptures, how liable is he to be ſorely diſtreſſed, when he meets with oppoſition, from foes internal or external! whilſt he who is eſtabliſhed in the truth, with eaſe ſurmounts the difficulties which may come in his way. Endeavour, then, to learn from the word, " *What is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of*



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e that the rule of your walk and

ve, in the ſtrength of the Lord, TO
ly, and to WALK in the path of
ing deſtroys our Chriſtian confi-
dulgence in it cauſeth God to hide
es a fear to apply the promiſes, and
ich the throne of grace. The word
faith and holineſs as intimately
ich, that thoſe who are celebrated
n faith, are commended as having
ary in holineſs.

end of their converſation, Heb. xiii. 7. It is ſaid, that in the Grecian races, the portraits of the moſt illuſtrious heroes, and of the ſwifteſt racers, were placed in full view, to the end that others might be excited at leaſt to equal them in their reſpective attainments. For the ſame purpoſe, many eminent examples are exhibited in the word of God. Go then *in the footſteps of the flock;* and duly conſider the force of this apoſtolic exhortation: "*Seeing then* "we have *ſo great a cloud of witneſſes, let us run with* "*patience the race ſet before us.*" But, beſides theſe *general* means, THE HOLY SUPPER OF THE LORD is particularly deſigned; and when uſed in a RIGHT manner, greatly conducive to the believer's ADVANCEMENT in the life of faith: for as baptiſm ſignifies and ſeals the ingrafting of a ſoul into Chriſt, ſo the Supper of the Lord is intended to ſtrengthen believers in the divine life. A child that by its birth receives life, has need of conſtant nouriſhment, that it may acquire ſtrength and growth; and ſo does the child of God much need that nouriſhment, which he may expect from this holy ordinance, ſo well adapted to promote his furtherance in grace, whatever may be his ſituation.

1. Art thou ſaying, "I have but juſt begun the "walk of faith; I am only a babe in Chriſt; all that "I have experienced is but a deſire, a looking, a "longing for grace, and an intereſt in Chriſt." O! come to the table of the Lord, even in ſuch a frame; there thou mayſt ſee Jeſus in his all-ſufficiency, ready to ſatisfy all thy deſires. As the tender infant eagerly pants for the breaſt, to be nouriſhed by it, pant thou after ELSCHADDAI, the all-ſufficient God. This word is derived from another, which ſignifies A FULL breaſt, to intimate, that in God, there is a

hauſtible fulneſs, and a willing-
of that fulneſs. Come then, open
hat it may be filled; earneſtly de-
k of the word, that thou mayſt grow
old to aſſure thee, that the moſt
is not ſo much diſpoſed to cheriſh
oſom, as the all-ſufficient Jeſus is
his grace, the ſoul that comes to
ſeals in the ſacrament of the Sup-
ungry, thirſty, empty, thou art,
u art for being filled and ſatisfied.
aid to acknowledge that thou haſt

and he ſolemnly ſeals this to thee in the ſacrament of the Supper.

3. Are there any ſincerely engaged in the divine life, who, however, for their ſtrengthening and eſtabliſhing, are DESIROUS OF MORE COMFORT AND SATISFACTION, by SENSIBLY TASTING THAT THE LORD IS GRACIOUS? In this holy ordinance, *bread* is offered to ſtrengthen, and *wine to make glad their hearts.* Jeſus calls you, ſaying, "*Come eat of* "*my bread, and drink of the wine which I have min-*"*gled.*" Here you may be *abundantly ſatisfied with the fatneſs* of God's houſe, *and drink of the rivers of his pleaſure;* but keep it always in mind, that this ſpiritual nouriſhment is imparted to you, that in the ſtrength of it, you may travel through the wilderneſs of this world, till you in ſafety arrive at the *mount* of God above. Elijah was nouriſhed by the food which Divine Providence had prepared for him, *forty days, until he came* to Horeb; in like manner muſt you ſeek to be ſtrengthened, not for *one* day, but from one communion ſabbath to another.

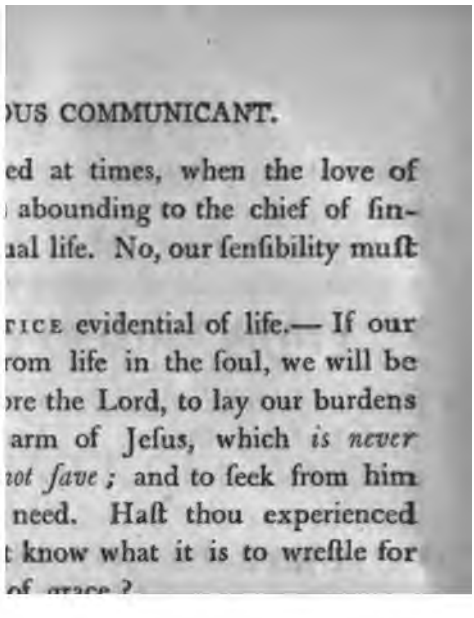
You may perhaps ſay, "This would, indeed, be "the caſe, were I to continue in that comfortable "frame in which I found myſelf at the table; but "it often happens, that I have no ſooner left it, than "I loſe that comfortable and delightful experience "of the *love of God ſhed abroad on my heart,* and "hence my ſoul is again enveloped in darkneſs." This may, indeed, be the caſe with thee; for God deſigns by this to teach thee not to *walk by ſight,* but by faith. Hath God ſealed anew his promiſes to thy ſoul? live then upon them, and conſider with thyſelf, that now thou art called to live BY FAITH, and that the SENSIBLE ENJOYMENT is reſerved for thee in heaven. God will give thee to experience

't new courage and ſtrength, to
iemies: thou wilt find that Satan
in tempting to ſin, or in making
hen it has pleaſed the Lord to re-
ader ſuch a trial, thou wilt be
that all the benefit of the ordi-
his may be a very falſe conclu-
mſtances, believer, it is thy duty
m in the faith, to quit thyſelf like
; and for thine encouragement,
d will give thee new pledges of
e thy faith, and to eſtabliſh thy

paths, ye have no part in the privileges of the people of God. Hence we have no warrant, no freedom, to invite you to the table of the Lord; for all that is there tranſacted and enjoyed is only by faith. Lay yourſelves then at the feet of Jeſus, plead with him effectually to work faith in your ſouls, and to make bare his omnipotent arm, to illuſtrate his glory in your ſalvation. But,

Secondly. Afflicted ſoul, thou whoſe faith is weak, doſt thou thus complain, "Much have I heard, as to "what it is to live by faith; but inſtead of proving "any encouragement to me, I am in great doubt "and fear, leſt to this very day I am deſtitute of true "faith; ſo little it is that I know of all what I have "heard. By what marks may I aſcertain, whether I "am a ſubject of ſpiritual life?" We anſwer,

1. The EMOTIONS and FEELING SENSE of divine things, which thou doſt experience, is an evidence that THOU HAST LIFE; for one that is dead is deſtitute of feeling. Touch him, make inciſions in his fleſh, he remains motionleſs; it is juſt ſo with the dead ſinner: if he be addreſſed in a manner the moſt affectionate; if all the curſes with which he is threatened; if all the judgments which are reſerved for him in the ſtores of heaven be ſet before him, he is indifferent ſtill. Now permit us to aſk thee, "Is "not thy heart eaſily moved, and affected with ten-"derneſs, when thou heareſt proclaimed in thine ears, "the wretchedneſs of the ſinner, the fulneſs of the "Saviour, and the great privileges of thoſe that fear "God?" And are not theſe certain ſigns that thou haſt life. But we would not preſume to aſſert, that all who are occaſionally made to tremble, becauſe ſin lieth at their door, or become impreſſed with the reality of things of eternity under ſermon; or who



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ed at times, when the love of
) abounding to the chief of fin-
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)re the Lord, to lay our burdens
arm of Jeſus, which *is never*
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Lecture VI.

ON THE PEACE, JOY AND TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

HAVING, in the preceding lecture, treated of the LIFE OF FAITH, and delineated the courſe which the Chriſtian purſues, in his journey towards the heavenly Canaan, we purpoſe, now, to invite your attention to ſome of the BLESSED EFFECTS, which a life ſo holy, and a courſe ſo pleaſing to God, produce. The effects to which we particularly allude are, the *peace*, the *joy*, and the *triumph of faith*. Our deſign, in treating on theſe ſubjects, is, on the one hand, to encourage the children of God, who have commenced travelling the road of faith, to proceed in it with ardour and zeal; and on the other, to allure ſuch as are yet in a ſtate of nature, to make choice of a courſe, in which they may meet with *peace* and *joy*, both in life and death.

We ſhall reduce what we have to ſay on theſe ſubjects, to the three following heads:

1. We ſhall explain the NATURE of the peace,

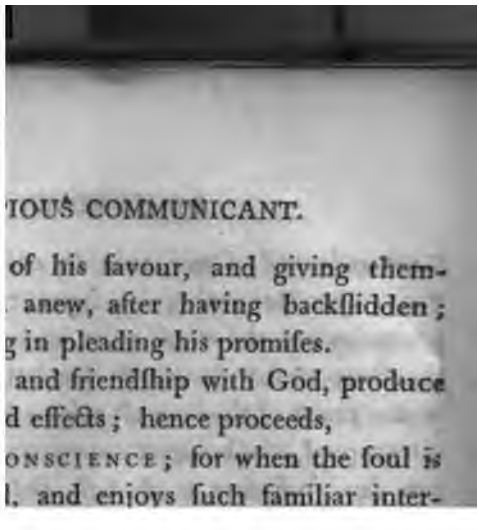
of the Chriſtian, and ſhew how
faith.
quire, whether theſe fruits of faith
L believers, at ALL times, with a
comfort to the weak and diſtreſſed

hen attempt an application ſuitable
nd circumſtances of men.
proceed to conſider theſe ſeveral
ld remark, that if it be aſked,
e ourſelves to the *peace*, *joy*, and
ſince there are many other fruits

According to this deſcription, we ſhall conſider what this peace PRESUPPOSES; then ſpeak of the PEACE ITSELF; and laſtly, its effects.

1. It preſuppoſes, that man, by nature, is an enemy to God; for were there no enmity, there would be no neceſſity of making peace: the idea of peace alſo implies, that the enmity which once exiſted is removed.

Man, at firſt, created in the image of God, enjoyed fellowſhip, and held ſweet converſe with his Maker, as with his moſt intimate friend; but by the intervention of ſin, this friendſhip was deſtroyed, and man hath become an enemy to God; he lifts up the weapons of rebellion againſt him; he *ſtretcheth out his hand againſt God, and ſtrengtheneth himſelf againſt the Almighty;* he *runneth upon him, even on his neck, and upon the thick boſſes of his buckler, and ſaith, depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways*, Job xxxv. 25, 26. And God, on the other hand, who cannot but hate ſin, and whoſe holineſs and juſtice are diſhonoured by it, is become an enemy to man; for *the fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in his ſight;* he *hateth all workers of iniquity*, Pſalm v. 6. As an enemy to God, man comes into the world, and in this awful ſtate he lives; for, ſays Paul, Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity againſt God.* Yes, and in this awful ſtate he muſt have died, if God himſelf, even from eternity, had not entertained thoughts of peace, and aroſe to deliver him from his wretched condition. It was his infinite WISDOM that deviſed the plan of ſetting apart the Son of his love as mediator and ſurety; and his unſpeakable GOODNESS and infinite power, that executed redemption's glorious and aſtoniſhing plan, when he actually ſent him into the world; for then it was the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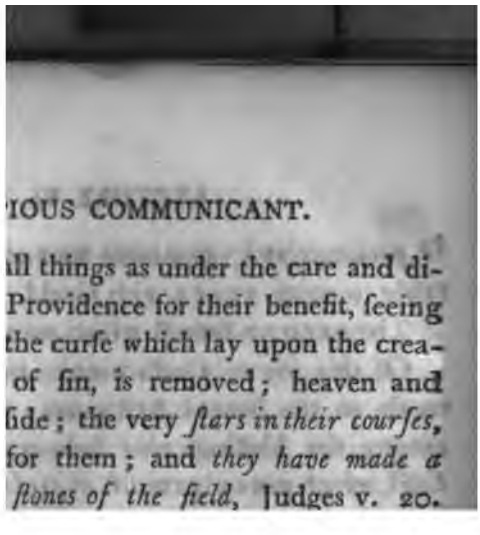
of his favour, and giving them-
anew, after having backſlidden;
g in pleading his promiſes.
and friendſhip with God, produce
d effects; hence proceeds,
ONSCIENCE; for when the ſoul is
l, and enjoys ſuch familiar inter-

" *towards me? I will take the cup of ſalvation, and* " *call upon the name of the Lord.*" In *adverſity*, this peace makes the mind calm and compoſed; and is the ſheet-anchor on which the believer quietly rides in the midſt of the ſevereſt gales. When this peace is interrupted, the believer enjoys no comfort, until he can ſay, " *Return to thy reſt, O! my ſoul; for the* " *Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*" In a word, this peace is the fortreſs in which the Chriſtian is ſafe, when ASSAULTED by enemies, or THREATENED with dangers.

b. From peace with God, proceeds not only peace with conſcience, but alſo, PEACE WITH ANGELS, who *are miniſtering ſervants, ſent forth to miniſter to them that are heirs of ſalvation*, Heb. ii. 14. Theſe heavenly hoſts are conſtantly employed in guarding the elect; for we read, Pſ. xxxiv. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.* As *chariots and horſes of fire*, they preſerved Eliſha from falling into the hands of the king of Aſſyria, 2 Kings vi. 17. Yes; they wait to eſcort the ſouls of believers, at death, from earth to Abraham's boſom; to that heavenly ſtate of glory, in which they ſhall be kept in everlaſting ſecurity.

c. All the FRIENDS of God, as well thoſe in heaven as thoſe on earth, are at PEACE with thoſe who have peace with God; *they are fellow-citizens of the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God*; they have one and the ſame mediator, who reconciles them to God; one and the ſame ſpirit who works in them; they travel one road; have one end in view, and ſhall at laſt enjoy the ſame glory.

d. They have peace with all the CREATION OF GOD. Nothing which the eternal hath formed can injure them; for *all things work together for their*



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ll things as under the care and di-
Providence for their benefit, ſeeing
the curſe which lay upon the crea-
of ſin, is removed; heaven and
ſide; the very *ſtars in their courſes*,
for them; and *they have made a*
ſtones of the field, Judges v. 20.

O precious and invaluable fruit of faith! how deſirable to enjoy PEACE with God!

The SECOND benefit which we mentioned is JOY:

Of this joy of God's people, frequent mention is made in the Sacred Scriptures: it is enumerated among the bleſſings that belong to the kingdom of God, which not only conſiſt of *righteouſneſs* and *peace*, but alſo of JOY, Rom. xiv. 17. Therefore believers are often exhorted to the exerciſe of it: thus the Pſalmiſt addreſſed Iſrael, Pſ. xxxiii. 11, *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous; and ſhout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart:* and Paul exhorts, *Rejoice in the Lord; and again I ſay rejoice*, Phil. iv. 4. By this joy we are to underſtand, "That delightful tranquillity and contented frame of mind, "which is wrought, by the Holy Ghoſt, in the heart "of a believer, who is at peace with God, which "proceeds from a clear apprehenſion, and ſenſible "enjoyment of the favour of God, and from a believing view of his intereſt in all the covenant "bleſſings purchaſed by Chriſt, which, in part, he "already poſſeſſes, or for which he *waits in hope*; "which holy frame manifeſts itſelf both in words "and actions."

1. The AUTHOR of this joy is GOD; for it is ſpiritual, heavenly, and divine; which none but the Eternal can produce; therefore David calls God *his exceeding joy*, Pſal. xliii. 4. It is numbered among the fruits of the ſpirit, Gal. v. 22. The Holy Ghoſt produces it, by accompanying the word and ordinances with ſuch divine influences, as to diſcover to believers the excellence of thoſe privileges and bleſſings which are the matter of their joy; and by this diſcovery to let them ſee their intereſt in thoſe

ariſe a ſweet calm, and ſatisfaction

of this joy is the HEART of a be-
ide righteous before God, enjoys
and is brought within the bonds of
us, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. iv. 8.
lneſs in my heart; and again, Pſal.
f them rejoice that ſeek the Lord.—
ard things, the believer may have
rrow; and yet his heart may leap
for, when his *fleſh and his heart*
ſtrength of his heart and his portion

ſings purchaſed by Chriſt, and promiſed in the covenant, are matter of joy to the people of God. They rejoice that God ſhould FORGIVE their ſins, which would have ruined them for ever, by graciouſly declaring them righteous in Chriſt; that he ſhould adopt into his family thoſe who, by nature, are among the chief of ſinners; and betroth them to his Son, giving them an intereſt in all his riches and treaſures; and that he ſhould BESTOW upon them, not only all that they need in time, but what is ſtill greater, "*a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*" 2 Cor. 4. 17.

4. This joy itſelf is a delightful tranquillity and holy SATISFACTION of ſoul, which manifeſts itſelf,

a. In thoſe lively AFFECTIONS which ariſe in the heart, from contemplating God as an all-ſufficient and covenant God, who poſſeſſes all perfections, and diſplays them, not only in his works of nature, but of grace. Here, *with open face, the believer beholds, as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the ſame image from glory to glory, even as by the ſpirit of the Lord.* There is beſides, in this joy, a lively view of the bleſſings of the covenant; and this is the *unction of the Holy One, by which we know all things*, 1 John ii. 20.

b. This joy not only manifeſts itſelf by a mere contemplation of theſe objects, but it alſo evidences its exiſtence, when God, by the internal witneſs of his ſpirit in the heart, aſſures the believer of HIS SAVING INTEREST in all thoſe bleſſings. Is he aſſured that God is his God; that he is an object of his everlaſting love; that all his ſins are pardoned; that the all-ſufficient Jeſus, with all his riches and benefits, are his? no tongue can expreſs what ſa-

tisfaction it affords, what delightful emotions it raiſes, and what compoſure of mind it creates.

c. But this joy is ſtill farther increaſed when God, by gracious RETURNS of love, gives the believer a lively SENSE of his goodneſs; ſo as not only to enable him to ſay, "*I know in whom I have believed, and* "*that he is able to keep that which I have committed* "*unto him*;" but when embracing him in the arms of his love, he ſays to him, "*Son, be of good cheer,* "*thy ſins are forgiven thee; I am thy ſalvation; fear* "*not, I am thy God.*" This voice the believer knows as well as Mary did that of Jeſus, when he called to her by name, *Mary!* and ſhe anſwered, *Rabboni! my maſter.* This, indeed, is *to eat of the hidden manna;* this is to *be abundantly ſatisfied with the fatneſs of God's houſe;* this is *to drink of the rivers of his pleaſure;* this is *to receive the* white ſtone, *in which a new name is written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.* And what is this new name, but CHILD of God?

d. This internal affection of the mind, which is ſtyled JOY, is, with great propriety, denominated *cheerfulneſs* when it diſcovers itſelf by WORDS and ACTIONS.

A. Joy expreſſing itſelf by WORDS, celebrates the praiſes of God's majeſty, and ſpeaks of all his wonderful works. This *corn makes the young men cheerful;* and this *new wine, the maids,* Zach. ix. 17. Joy in the heart makes the tongue to be much employed in *declaring* and *ſhewing* forth the glories of the great Triune.

B. Joy in the heart will evidence itſelf by ACTIONS. The affection of joy experienced by a natural man, qualifies him the better for buſineſs; in like manner, ſpiritual joy makes the Chriſtian *to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint,* Iſai. xl. 31.

Therefore David ſays, Pſ. cxix. 32, *I will run the way of thy commandments when thou ſhalt enlarge my heart.*

5. The PROPERTIES of this joy, according to Peter, are two: it is *unſpeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Peter, i. 8.

a. It is an UNSPEAKABLE joy; for one can better experience it than expreſs it by words: hence it is called the hidden manna; and with equal propriety, Paul aſſerts, that "*It paſſeth all underſtanding.*" We may likewiſe exclaim, *eye hath not ſeen, ear hath not heard* what it is. Not only is the natural man wholly unacquainted with it; but even the experienced Chriſtian is unable fully to deſcribe it.

b. It is alſo a joy FULL of glory; not only becauſe it is wrought in the heart by the *ſpirit of glory*, but becauſe, in its very nature it is glorious.

A. How far does it TRANSCEND all WORLDLY joy, which at beſt is but empty and vain, extends only to objects of time, and can never afford ſatisfaction: yes, in the midſt of ſuch joy the heart is ſorrowful; but the joy of the Chriſtian, having for its objects things ſpiritual and divine, is ſubſtantial; it fills the heart with ſuch ſupreme delight, that with Mary, it can ſay, "My *ſoul rejoiceth* in God, my Saviour, Luke i. 46.

B. It is a glorious joy, becauſe it is FIRM and STEADFAST; for Jeſus hath declared, "*Your joy no "man taketh from you.*" It will remain when every thing elſe forſakes us; ſo that the believer can ſing in the delightful ſtrains of the prophet Habakkuk, "*Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom; neither ſhall "fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive ſhall fail, "and the fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall be cut "off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the*

ejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the
on," Hab. iii. 17, 18. Yes, fre-
s of the greateſt AFFLICTION,
nces this joy in the higheſt de-
Job, he *ſit among the aſhes*, depriv-
al comfort, and deſtitute of every
heart; yet even then he can be *glad*
joice in the hope of that portion
r him in heaven. In POVERTY
a ſenſe of the goodneſs of God
ter his bread with tears of joy:
he has for the *lot* of his *inherit-*

" the triune God, and intereſt in the benefit of the " covenant, either in poſſeſſion or proſpect, makes " him to eſteem himſelf truly happy, and, compara- " tively, to deſpiſe all inferior things."

It therefore excludes all kinds of *boaſting*, and glorying in himſelf; in his own *wiſdom*, *ſtrength*, and worthineſs; for, *let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, nor the ſtrong man in his ſtrength, nor the rich man in his riches, but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he knoweth me, ſaith the Lord*, Jer. xix. 24. Hence we find him deſcribed as clothed with humility, and, with the father of the faithful, confeſſing that he is but *duſt and aſhes*. The only ground, therefore, of the triumph of faith, is a believing view of God in Chriſt, as the portion of the ſoul, and the bleſſedneſs thence ariſing.

This triumph of the believer is a magnanimous exerciſe of the ſoul, by which he eſteems himſelf to be in a happy and glorious ſtate; for he triumphs

1. In the TRIUNE GOD; that Jehovah the FATHER is his father; that he is one *born of God*; that he who was by nature a *child of wrath*, and Satan's ſlave, hath been adopted as a child of God; and that *God* hath *made with him an everlaſting covenant*. Surely that man cannot but exult and triumph, who hath the God of heaven and earth for his God; who is enabled to view the Eternal as one who hath loved him from eternity; who will never ceaſe to love, and will permit him to hold ſweet fellowſhip with him. Will the favour of a king, who is but a worm of the duſt, inſpire courage? how much more animating to reflect, that ſinful duſt, very worms, may hold intercourſe with the King of heaven!

The believer triumphs in CHRIST and his merits, as his SURETY, as his *foundation and chief corner-*

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

he is ſo firmly built, *that the gates*
revail againſt him; he glories in
exhauſtible treaſures. "O!" ſays
NOTHING; but in Chriſt I have
an do all things; I was poor, but
rich; I was IGNORANT, but he
God unto me wiſdom; I was guil-
been made unto me *righteouſneſs*;
at he hath become my *ſtrength*;
neither want nor deſire any thing

umphs in the SPIRIT OF GLORY

" afflicted I went aſtray, but now have I kept thy word."

3. The true believer triumphs over ALL his ENEMIES; by faith he can lift up his head, and boldly reſiſt all their aſſaults. Does the LAW, in loud thunders, utter its curſes againſt his innumerable tranſgreſſions? he can exclaim, in the language of the Apoſtle, " *There is now therefore no condemnation to* " *them that are in Chriſt Jeſus;*" for he is enabled to behold him as that complete Redeemer who hath fulfilled the *righteouſneſs of the law*, and *condemned ſin in the fleſh*: clad in the garments of his *ſalvation*, *he greatly rejoices in the Lord.* Does CONSCIENCE accuſe him of his numberleſs errors and defects in duty? he triumphs in this, that he has a ſurety who can and will put him in poſſeſſion of complete ſalvation; one who *is the advocate with the Father, and hath been made a propitiation for all his ſins;* whoſe blood is of infinite value and perpetual efficacy. Does SATAN, *the accuſer of the brethren, lay any thing to his charge?* Does he ſeek to diſturb his peace; to alarm his fears, and ſhake his confidence; he can triumph, and, addreſſing the adverſary, ſay, " *Get thee behind me, Satan; the* " *Lord rebuke thee*, even the Lord *who hath choſen* " *Jeruſalem;* I am a brand plucked out of thy " hands; I have nothing more to fear from thee; my " ſurety, to whom I am united by faith, *hath engra-* " *ven me in the palms of his hands;* I know that *noth-* " *ing ſhall ſeparate me from his love*, and that I *ſhall* " *be more than a conqueror.*" In this way the believer can *rejoice in the ſalvation of his God, and in his name lift up his banners.* Is he deſpiſed or hated by the WORLD? he glories in being among the number whom the King of kings *delighteth to honour.* Does the world endeavour to allure him by its charms, its grandeur, its riches and its pleaſures?

e croſs of Chriſt, *whereby the world and he to the world.* The croſs of n,— the reproach which Jeſus ſuf- ; and his wounds, his refuge and

r triumphs OVER DEATH, and in proaching JUDGMENT; and be- union between Chriſt, the prince al, is ſo cloſe and intimate, he can than Agag could, exclaim, "*Surely death is paſt;*" for Chriſt, by his away the ſting of death, and made

Chriſtian has a full and joyful CONFIDENCE that he is reſerved for heaven, and heaven for him; becauſe he has already been made to partake of its firſt fruits, and to enjoy a prelibation of its bleſſedneſs. But in what do theſe firſt fruits conſiſt?

a. In a lively APPREHENSION of the glory of the life to come: heaven, in a manner, deſcends into the ſoul, or the believer is led into heaven; and thus beholds the Eternal, the Lord Jeſus, and the bleſſed ſpirits who are before the throne, as if preſent with them, which cauſes him in extaſy to cry out, "*Eye "hath not ſeen, nor ear heard,*" 1 Cor. ii. 9.

b. In affectionate ASPIRATIONS of ſoul towards God; in holy COMPLACENCY and ardent deſires, and in receiving a gracious RETURN from God, by his EMBRACING the believer in the arms of his love; ſo that, on the one hand, the believer profeſſes, "*I love "thee, O Lord, my ſtrength;*" God, on the other hand, replies, "*I have loved thee with an everlaſting love, "therefore with loving kindneſs have I drawn thee.*"

c. In that JOY unſpeakable, and full of glory, of which we have already ſpoken.

Now when the believer experiences all theſe, in a leſs or greater degree, he has a foretaſte of heaven, as an *earneſt of his future* inheritance. Theſe are the firſt fruits which inſure the full enjoyment; for after the firſt fruits, the harveſt is gathered in.

B. The triumph of faith, as intimated before, conſiſts "in his having a proſpect of enjoying that ſal- "vation in its perfection, of which he has already "had ſome foretaſte."

"O, ſaith the believer, is a SIGHT of God here "on earth ſo delightful, though it be *but as in a glaſs* "*darkly*, or, as it were, by the light of the moon and "ſtars? how raviſhing muſt be the view, when I

the *palace of the king*, and there
to face, where all darkneſs ſhall be
l; where there *ſhall be no night*,
of the Lord ſhall be the *light* of
Is it here ſo ſweet and comfortable
e ſmall diſcoveries of the LOVE of
f our love to him? what tranſ-
the ſoul, when this love ſhall be
e, and continue for ever to burn
n! Is the preſent JOY of the
as to make him look upon all the

thought. Hence it is that in proſperity they are not unduly elevated, and that in adverſity, they poſſeſs that compoſed reſignation which ariſes from the contemplation of that better, and more durable inheritance, which is reſerved for them in heaven.

c. In a lively HOPE, and earneſt LONGING for the bleſſedneſs of heaven; for which, however, the believer patiently waits till God's appointed time; aſſured that he will never *forſake the work of his hands*, but *perfect* what he has begun, the Chriſtian confidently expects that he who, by his grace, has brought him into the heavenly road, will conduct him in it, until he has obtained *the end of his faith, the ſalvation of his ſoul.*

Thus, we have briefly ſhown in what conſiſt the peace, the joy, and the triumph of the Chriſtian. Let us now ſee HOW each of theſe flows from faith.— It is by faith that the believer takes hold of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, by which he is juſtified; and being juſtified, as the Apoſtle declares, *he hath* PEACE *with God.* A ſenſe of reconciliation and peace with God, cannot fail of producing JOY; and joy, when it is unſpeakable and full of glory, riſes to *triumph.* Hence the Pſalmiſt connects joy and triumph together, when he ſays, "*My ſoul ſhall make her boaſt in* "*the Lord: the humble ſhall hear thereof, and be glad,*" Pſal. xxxiv. 2.— Precious, indeed, muſt that faith be, which is productive of effects ſo heavenly, ſo divine!

We now proceed to the SECOND thing propoſed, which was, to inquire whether ALL theſe fruits of faith are found in ALL believers, at ALL times.

It is certain that the PRINCIPLE whence they proceed, is found in all true believers; for, however weak faith may be, ſtill it unites the ſoul to Chriſt, and

it an intereſt in his ſaving benefits.
o not at all times experience them
which they have been deſcribed.
gs with his people, diſplays both
l wiſdom: one paſſes through life
diſcouragement, having only a faith
ther is permitted to taſte a few
cup of conſolation, to keep him
ıe way: if he diſcover any light,
tranſient; whilſt others walk in
countenance, rejoice in his name

2. By ſuch diſpenſations, we are taught that the comfortable experiences of God's love, are not concluſive evidences of our being MORE ADVANCED IN GRACE than others. The reverſe is often true: hence we frequently ſee thoſe who are but commencing the divine life, enjoying thoſe manifeſtations of divine love, whilſt others, who have been long on the way, are deſtitute of them.— The pilot that ſails amongſt rocks and ſhoals, in the dark, exerciſes more ſkill in navigation, than he who, in pleaſant weather, at noon-day, ſteers the ſhip. It is greater grace to believe, and not to feel; to truſt, and not to ſee, than to walk in the light: hence he who experiences the fruits of faith in a high degree, has no cauſe of pride, but of great humility and thankfulneſs.

3. It is no evidence, becauſe a perſon enjoys the fruits of faith, as they have been exhibited, that he is, on that account, more PRECIOUS in the ſight of God than others; for God takes pleaſure in his people upon no other ground but the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, with which they are adorned; and, whether we are in a higher or lower degree ſenſible of our intereſt in that righteouſneſs, we may be equally acceptable to God. Beſides, the promiſes are not made to thoſe who have a feeling ſenſe, but to them who confide in Chriſt: for this reaſon, weak believers ought not to be diſcouraged, or conclude that the work in their heart is not genuine, becauſe they have not thoſe conſolations which others enjoy. Their hearts ought not to be troubled; for have they only found their ſouls cleaving to the Lord, holding him faſt, looking to him, and waiting for their Jeſus? they have, as has been proved at large, true faith, and conſequently true grace.

We now proceed to the THIRD thing propoſed,

ply the ſubject. And in the firſt
word to addreſs to thee, POOR and
DLING! Is the ſtate of the people
is? Is there in the ſervice of God
d joy, and cauſe of triumph? why
charmed with that ſervice? that
r and mean conceptions of it, and
f piety to be neceſſarily connected
elancholy, that a perſon upon be-
, muſt bid a final adieu to all plea-
age is, "ſuch a ſorrowful life would

PEACE; but it is not that which Jeſus gives, and *which paſſeth underſtanding*. Thy peace ariſes from ſupine indifference, and a wretched inſenſibility; it is as different from the peace of which we have been ſpeaking, as life and death, heaven and hell. And art thou anxious to know wherein the difference lies? we anſwer, in the following particulars:

1. Thy peace is the creature of the imagination; it is a peace which reſts upon NO FOUNDATION; for thou haſt never felt any real ſorrow of heart becauſe of thine enmity againſt God, and thy alienation from him. Thou haſt never taken refuge to Chriſt, the *Prince of Peace*, nor laid down the weapons of thy rebellion. But the children of God never attain to peace with God, without more or leſs of ſorrow for ſin: the enmity in which they lived before converſion, has deeply affected their hearts; this has produced ſuch diſquietude of mind as has cauſed them to cry out for pardon, and made them fly to Chriſt for reconciliation.

2. Thou art not willing to have thy peace DISTURBED; thou art offended with any one who would diſquiet thy repoſe; if conſcience is alarmed, thou ſayeſt with Felix, "*Go thy way for this time; "when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee;*" and thus thou ſettleſt thyſelf in thy former ſecurity. But the man who has really obtained peace with God, is notwithſtanding often diſtreſſed, becauſe he diſtruſts his own heart, and therefore is willing to be diſturbed, and to ſee the worſt of himſelf: he often ſupplicates the throne, "*Search me, O! God, and "try me,*" Pſ. cxxxix. 23.

3. Thy peace permits thee TO LIVE AT EASE in thy ſins; thou ſayeſt within thyſelf, "I ſhall have "peace, though I *walk after the imagination of my*

e more peace the child of God en-
reful he is to live ſoberly and right-
d. He is aware that the leaſt in-
reaks in upon the friendſhip which
God and his ſoul; and therefore he
ly, and *works out his ſalvation with*
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examining thy heart, thou canſt
marks, thou mayſt be aſſured that
of peace with God, and a ſtranger
oy and triumph; thou mayſt in-
it is a joy which is worldly, ſinful,

down the weapons of thine oppoſition; bring thy heart, with all its enmity, before God, by prayer and ſupplication, that he himſelf would humble it; ſeek peace through the blood of Chriſt alone; that will produce real joy. Believe it, that the joys which the world preſents are vain and tranſitory, but thoſe of which the believer taſtes, are ſubſtantial and durable; yes, even the tears which he ſheds in ſecret before God, for his ſins, are accompanied with more gladneſs than THOU haſt ever experienced in the enjoyment of all that the world could give. Pray then, with David, "*Remember me Lord, with the favour that* "*thou beareſt unto thy people*, that *I may* REJOICE *in* "*the gladneſs of thy nation; that I may* GLORY *with* "*thine inheritance*," Pſ. cvi. 4, 5.

But, ſecondly, we have a word to addreſs to God's people, for their encouragement and direction.

Here, perhaps, the DISHEARTENED and DISTRESSED Chriſtian may be alarmed and ſay, "When "I examine myſelf with reſpect to the loweſt degrees "of faith, as hungering, thirſting, deſiring and look-"ing, I dare not but confeſs that I have experienced "theſe; but when I am told what fruits are produ-"ced by faith, I am led to ſuſpect its reality; for "had I true faith, I might expect, ſometimes at "leaſt, to experience ſome of thoſe fruits." But we aſk you,

1. Doſt thou not eſteem thoſe truly BLESSED, who are permitted to ENJOY FRIENDSHIP with God, and to experience joys divine? Haſt thou not often deſired that thou mighteſt experience the ſame? Whence proceed thoſe deſires, but from having been *taught of the Lord*, how truly precious thoſe bleſſings are?

thing in the world which can give
l JOY or SATISFACTION? Doſt
ll things as *loſs and dung*, when
comfort of which thy ſoul par-
ightful moments, when thou haſt
hy God? Wouldſt thou heſitate
ldſt exchange thine hope, ſmall as
ing God for thy portion, for all
afford? Is not God more precious
uſand worlds?
ver GLORIED in thyſelf, and doſt

for their object, and that to thee, his *favour is life, and his loving kindneſs better than life?*

5. Although thou complaineſt of never having experienced the fruits of faith in a high degree, wouldſt thou dare to aſſert that thou haſt not at all felt its peace, joy and triumph? Canſt thou not recollect the moments when thou couldſt diſtinguiſh whether God was at a diſtance, or near to thy ſoul, with his light and influences? When in ſecret thou didſt WRESTLE with God in prayers, and with tears; when thy ſoul went out towards him with ſuch ardent affections, that all which the world could proffer appeared but little in thine eyes, didſt thou not then feel thy heart ſweetly ſerene? Did not thoſe very tears thou didſt ſhed, when confeſſing thy ſins before the Lord, when thy heart burned with affection to God, produce more real JOY than ever thou exerciſedſt with regard to any terreſtrial objects; yea, did not the joy which the world once afforded, vaniſh and ceaſe to be joy to thee? and when God has called thee to SEVERE trials, under which thou kneweſt not how to ſupport thyſelf, haſt thou not been enabled to TRIUMPH in the ſtrength of thy Redeemer God? Has not that *ſtrength been perfected in thy weakneſs*, ſo that thou couldſt proceed on thy way in the might of Jehovah? Haſt thou never taſted any of the FIRST FRUITS of heaven, in the exerciſe of a ſupreme, undivided, and ſincere love to God, and the Lord Chriſt? Moreover, wouldſt thou not delight to IMITATE the inhabitants of heaven, in a holy walk, and with a mind ſet upon objects above? Say, haſt thou experienced all theſe things? then, though thou mayeſt not feel this peace, joy and triumph, as has been deſcribed, yet be aſſured, the principle of faith is in thine heart. It is not

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no uncommon thing for God to change his mode of dealing with his people: it would be an extraordinary circumſtance were you always to walk in the light; the ſun is often obſcured by the intervening cloud; and there are ſubſtantial reaſons, both on GOD'S PART and ON YOUR OWN, for his peculiar dealings with you:.

1. God will, by ſuch dealings, teach you to maintain CONFIDENCE in an hour of darkneſs; to depend upon his promiſes, and to live upon former experiences. We cannot form a full and perfect idea of what it is to truſt in the Lord, unleſs we are led in ways impenetrably dark.

2. God will, by ſuch diſpenſations, TRY YOUR FAITH, your LOVE, your PATIENCE and CONSTANCY. It is an eaſy matter to continue in the ways of godlineſs, and to cleave to the Lord, when he is nigh unto us, and, faith's eye behold the ſun of righteouſneſs; but it requires faith *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, to make the ſoul cry out with Job, "*Though he ſlay me, yet will* "*I truſt in him.*" Beloved, no one can expreſs with what readineſs the Lord hearkens to thoſe bold notes of his moaning dove, *in the clefts of the rock*, and *in the ſecret places* of *the ſtairs*.

3. God makes you to feel at times, the *horror of great darkneſs*, that you may KNOW SOMETHING by experience, OF THAT DISTRESS which filled the ſoul of the bleſſed Jeſus, who, after having conſtantly walked in the light of his Father's countenance, endured ſuch hidings of his face as made him cry out, "*My God! my God; why haſt thou forſaken me?*" to the end that you may be excited to love your Redeemer with warmer affection; and alſo, that in this reſpect you may become conformable to his image.

leſigns, by theſe dark diſpenſations
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1. Be not overmuch DEJECTED on account of your failure in duty; but humble yourſelves before God, and fly to the atoning blood of Chriſt for pardon.

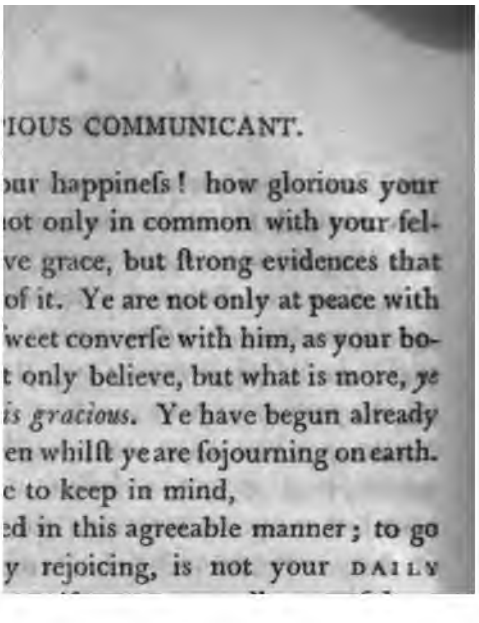
2. CONFESS before God, that it is he alone who giveth *power to the faint, and to thoſe who have no might, increaſeth ſtrength;* and that therefore, *without him ye can do nothing;* and muſt faint, if left by him to go without the ſun. Profeſs to him that ye can find no peace nor ſatisfaction in the creature apart from him, and that ye deſire him, and him alone, as the portion of your ſouls.

3. Give YOURSELVES anew to the Lord in the EXERCISE of a lively faith; caſt yourſelves afreſh into the arms of your compaſſionate Redeemer, and covenant God, and renew your covenant with him.

4. *Perſevere* in praying after the manner of David, Pſ. li. 12, "*Reſtore unto me the joy of thy ſalvation,* "*and uphold me with thy free ſpirit; make me to hear* "*joy and gladneſs, that the bones which thou haſt bro-* "*ken may rejoice.*" The Lord is a compaſſionate God; "*he will not always chide, neither will he keep his* "*anger for ever. Though in a little wrath he may hide* "*his face from you for a moment, yet with everlaſting* "*loving kindneſs will he have mercy on you.*"

5. And when the Lord ſhall again reveal himſelf to your ſouls, FOLLOW the example of the ſpouſe, who, when ſhe had found her beloved, *would not let him go.* In like manner, cleave to your Jeſus, by faith; ply him with tears and ſupplication, and honour him by a walk worthy of the grace you may have received: if God ever again *ſpeak peace* to your ſouls, be careful not to return *again to folly.*

But we have yet a word to you, believers, WHO ARE ESTABLISHED in the faith, and who EXPERIENCE its peace, its joy and triumph.



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

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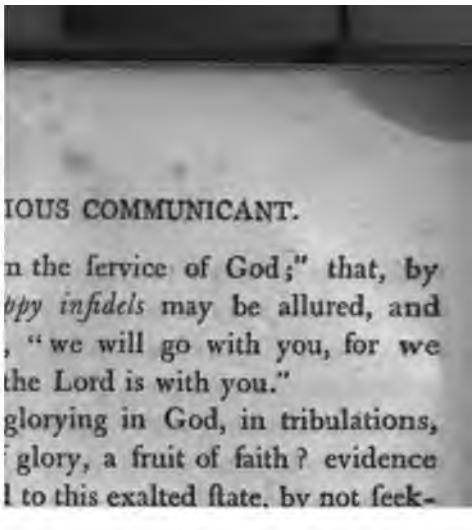
ward, and evidence to the world, by a tender and holy walk in the fear of the Lord, that ye are indeed travelling thither. Are your privileges great? your obligations are alſo great. Be then on your guard againſt careleſsneſs, lukewarmneſs, and ſloth: conſider that Satan is never more engaged to entangle you in ſin, than when ye have much of the divine preſence. Ye are therefore never more loudly called to watchfulneſs, than at ſuch a ſeaſon.— Watch againſt the very firſt temptations to remiſsneſs in the diſcharge of duty. Peace and holineſs muſt always go hand in hand.

4. Let your TONGUES frequently CELEBRATE the praiſes of your God. Does he give you aſſurances of his having *brought you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light?* ſtudy to diſplay the honour of his name. Have ye the beſt reaſons to believe that ye are intereſted *in the inheritance of the ſaints in light? give glory to God the Father, who hath made you meet to be partakers of this inheritance,* and ſing with the church, "*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my ſoul "ſhall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with "the robe of righteouſneſs,*" Iſaiah lxi. 10. and with David, "*I will ſing unto the Lord, becauſe he hath dealt bountifully with me,*" Pſal. xiii. 6. Let the praiſes of God *be ever on your tongues and in your hearts.*

5. Show to the world, THAT TO SERVE GOD IN CHRIST, IS ALWAYS PRODUCTIVE OF REAL JOY. Do you experience the joys of God's ſalvation internally? manifeſt it in your external conduct; and thus remove the prejudices which the world conceives againſt the divine religion of Chriſt, "that it makes "its votaries paſs their days in gloomy melancholy:" on the contrary, let it appear by your words and actions, "that no joys are to be compared with thoſe



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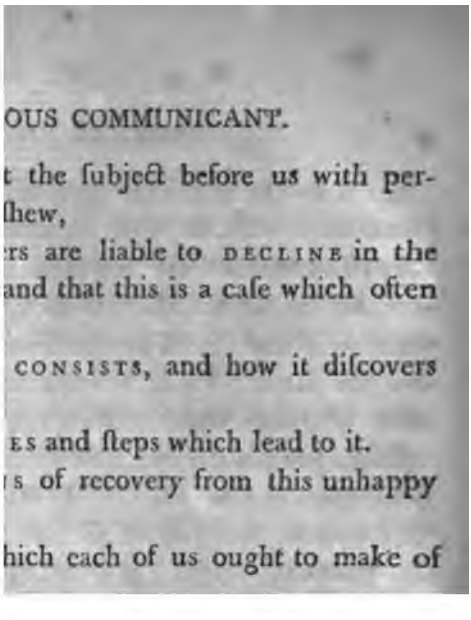
Lecture VII.

ON THE BACKSLIDINGS AND DECLENSIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, IN THE EXERCISE OF THE DIVINE LIFE.

HAVING, in the preceding lectures, exhibited the exercises of believers, and the blessed fruits which proceed from faith, we conceive it not to be improper, but highly expedient, in the present declining state of religion, to shew, "that a real child of God, "who once had made great advances in the divine "life, and lived near to God, may fall, and so much "decline in grace, that the lustre with which he once "shone, and which rendered him an ornament to "his profession, may become greatly obscured, and "disappear." The end which we propose, in treating on this subject, is, both the recovery of such as may have gone back in religion; the quickening of those who are making no progress in it, to be on the watch, lest they recede farther from God; and the preservation of those who are truly walking with God, by setting them on their guard against the danger of falling into a state of declension.



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2. It was to guard the people of God againſt declenſion in religion, that all thoſe pointed EXHORTATIONS and faithful warnings are given by Chriſt and his apoſtles. How often does the Lord Jeſus cry out, *Watch!* and the apoſtles, after his example, did the ſame. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, addreſſes them thus: "*Watch ye, ſtand faſt in the* "*faith, quit you like men; be ſtrong,*" 1 Cor. xvi. 13. And again, 2 Cor. vi. 1, "*We beſeech you alſo, that ye* "*receive not the grace of God in vain.*" Writing to the Romans, he exhorts them, *not to be conformed to this world;* and to the *Hebrews*, he adds, "*Looking* "*diligently, leſt any man fail of the grace of God,* Heb. xii. 15. Now all theſe excitations and admonitions would have been to no purpoſe, if the *people* of God might not, through the remains of indwelling ſin, fall into a ſtate of declenſion.

3. The EXAMPLES of the moſt eminent ſaints mentioned in ſcripture, CONFIRM this truth. DAVID, a *man after God's own heart*, not only fell into the ſins of murder and adultery, but he remained unaffected with his guilt, till Nathan, with a meſſage from God, pointedly told him, "*Thou art the* "*man,*" 2 Sam. 12. And SOLOMON, *whom the Lord loved*, went ſo far aſtray, that he offered religious worſhip *to Aſhtoreth, the goddeſs of the Zidonians, and Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites*, 1 Kings, xi. 4, 5. The experience of every day gives us but too much reaſon to ſay to many, as Paul to the Galatians, "Ye did run well, who hath hindered you?" Of too many, alas! it may be ſaid, as of Demas; "*Demas hath forſaken us, having loved this preſent* "*world.*" The truth of what has been ſaid above will more fully appear, when we come to the ſecond

head, "To ſhew more particularly, in what backſliding, or declenſion in religion, conſiſts.

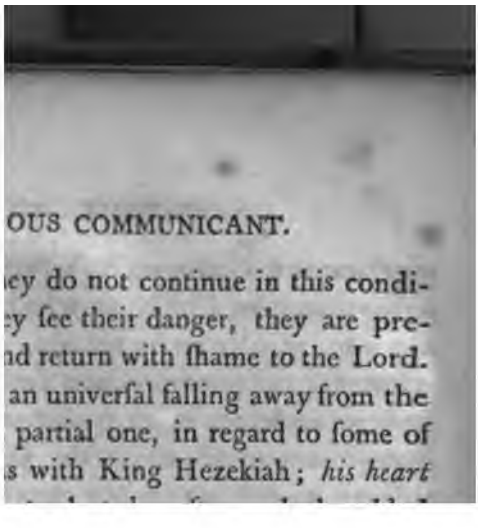
But, before we proceed to this, it muſt be remarked, "That as all is not grace that is taken for it, ſo all is not to be viewed as backſliding that men may eſteem ſuch." We aſſert,

1. That ALL is not GRACE which is taken for it. It is often found, that perſons, by means of a pious education, or by a faithful repreſentation of divine truths to their minds, by the common illuminations of the Holy Ghoſt, may go ſo far as externally to eſcape the pollutions of the world; to aſſociate with believers, and apparently have a deſire to walk in the way of life. It is indeed hard to tell to what lengths they may go, under the influence of an awakened conſcience; but though they appear *to begin with the Spirit*, yet, becauſe their hearts have never been purified from the love of ſin, they *end in the fleſh*. Now, when men of this deſcription return to the world, and engage again in its pleaſures and amuſements, this is no backſliding; for they never were partakers of true grace; all their religious exerciſes were but external; their hearts were never changed; their wills were never made ſubſervient to God; and therefore they did not perſevere to the end; they were *branches* which *did not bear fruit* in Chriſt, the living vine; and hence are *taken away*.

2. It is alſo a truth, that all that which may be conſidered by believers themſelves as backſliding, or declenſion in grace, is not in reality ſuch. When perſons, eſpecially thoſe who had been greatly under the dominion of ſin, and lived much after the courſe of this world, have been, by the power of divine grace, brought home to God, the change is often ſo great, that they IMMEDIATELY break aſunder all

the bonds of iniquity, and bid a final adieu to ſin, to the world, and to all that formerly had been the objects of their delight, and come out boldly for God and his ſervice: ſuch perſons the Lord often treats with much tenderneſs; their hearts are, at their firſt converſion, filled with love to God and Chriſt; and they are filled with great delight, from a conviction that they are loved by the Eternal, with the affection of the moſt tender parent; but they have yet a leſſon to learn, which often proves very painful to them; that is, "to diſcover how much corruption ſtill re-" mains within them." Now, when they are led to ſee how *deſperately wicked and deceitful their hearts* are, and when God, to teach them the knowledge of themſelves, is pleaſed to withhold the light of his countenance; when the ſummer, with all its charms, is changed into the gloom and drearineſs of winter, and God permits the enemy to rage, and their corruptions, which appeared to be ſubdued, again to ariſe and damp their courage and their zeal; in ſuch a caſe they begin to think they have certainly backſlidden; but this may be an erroneous concluſion; the very reverſe may be the truth; for, to be made to ſee ourſelves in our true character; to be humbled before God, and yet to cleave to him; to be, in a word, in a ſtate of darkneſs, and ſtill *to ſtay upon* God, is grace in a higher degree than that which is exerciſed by one who walks in the light of God's countenance; but believers may not ſee this, and therefore are filled with the apprehenſion, that they have gone back in religion; but,

3. We remark once more, that the backſlidings of God's people are to be conſidered as taking place in a twofold reſpect: Firſt, they may, unawares, fall into ſin, at a time when they have been off their



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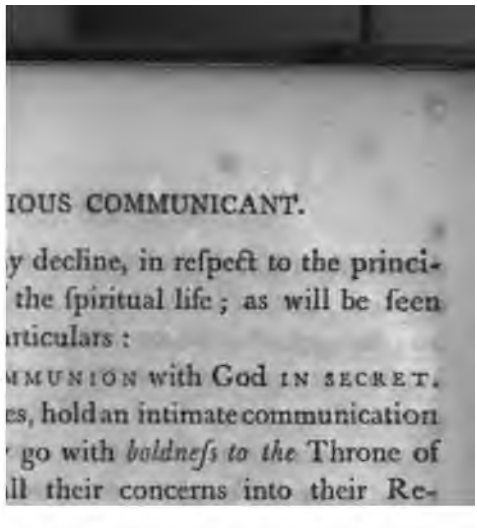
produces to the believer, higher attainments in knowledge than other Chriſtians, who have been longer on the way, uſually do in months, or even years; for when firſt the ſpirit produces faith in the heart, the believer embraces every opportunity, and improves every mean of acquiring the knowledge of divine things: no difficulty is too great, no pains are too ſevere; neither worldly buſineſs, nor regard to health, will prevent him from ſeeking to become more acquainted with God and the divine Redeemer: in this he finds ſo much comfort, ſo much delight, that with Jeremiah he exclaims, "*O Lord, thy words were* "*found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto* "*me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart,*" Jer. xv. 16. Hence proceeds a ſincere and cordial love to the truth, as it is in Jeſus, as well as a deſire to advance in the knowledge of it. But notwithſtanding all this, there may be a declenſion in knowledge; and this is ever the caſe,

A. When men become REMISS in ſelf-examination; when a ſmall obſtruction in their way is ſufficient to make them diſcontinue the reſearch; when, ſeeing the difficulty of acquiring this knowledge, they quit the purſuit; no longer ſtrive to *go on* towards *perfection*, and inſtead of making ſuch progreſs that they might be *teachers*, they ſtill continue *babes that have need of milk.*

B. When, through this ſluggiſh temper, they begin to entertain the idea, that KNOWLEDGE is not ſo NECESSARY as they at firſt ſuppoſed, and SPEAK ſlightly of the acquirements of others; or when, ſeeing that many have improved in ſpeculative knowledge, who have been deſtitute of grace, they reſolve to give themſelves no farther trouble in adding to their ſtock of divine information.



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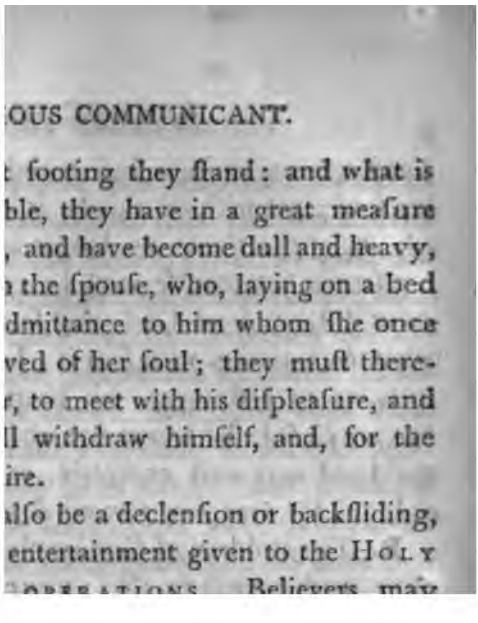
Lord appears as if he had withdrawn himſelf from his ſoul; yet with all this he is not ſuitably affected; he appears now, no longer anxious to keep up his former intercourſe with heaven; he is ſet at a great diſtance from God, and ſcarcely longer knows what communion with him is; he goes to him; but it is as to a ſtranger; his heart is ſtraitened, his lips are cloſed, he knows not what to utter. Of ſuch the Lord may well complain, as of his people of old, "*They have forgotten me days without number.*"

B. The children of God may alſo backſlide or decline, with reſpect to the EXERCISE of FAITH in the Lord Jeſus. O! how much were they taken up with Chriſt in the time of their firſt love; how precious was he then to their ſouls! *They counted all things but loſs for* Chriſt; their deſires flowed out inceſſantly towards him, and to him they fled for refuge. With what confidence and affection did they commit themſelves to his arms, and caſt upon him all their burdens! Without him they felt moſt ſenſibly that they could do nothing; but that through his ſtrength, they could perform all things. It is not now, however, thus with them; their faith is no more in its wonted lively exerciſe; they ſee not that preciouſneſs in Chriſt, and their need of conſtant dependence upon him, which once they ſaw; they become proud, and lean upon their own ſtrength; they ſeem to think that Jeſus is not now ſo neceſſary for them as they once ſuppoſed him to be; they, indeed, engage *in working out their own ſalvation*, but not as they did before, relying wholly upon this, that it is God that muſt *work in them, both to will and to do of his good pleaſure*; their faith has become ſo weakened, and they themſelves ſo much like *bruiſed reeds*, conſtantly wavering, through unbelief, that they can



CESSARILY into the way of temptation, they are hurried into ſin: thus to demean themſelves towards the Holy Ghoſt is grievous to him, as it is not acting agreeably to the light which he has given them.

c. In a word, the people of God quench the Holy Ghoſt, when his comforting INFLUENCES do not meet with a ſuitable ENTERTAINMENT; when they, who are the ſubject of them, inſtead of being HUMBLE and WATCHFUL, become PROUD and CARELESS. The Holy Spirit being thus grieved, withholds his quickening grace, and leaves his people, in a meaſure, to themſelves. His operations, now, are deſigned for their reſtoration; by writing bitter things againſt them, he would alarm them, and let them ſee how *evil and bitter a thing it is to ſin againſt God;* for when men depart from the Lord, they are ſeldom recovered without great diſtreſs of ſoul; as in the caſe of Peter, whoſe grievous fall coſt him much ſorrow and many tears.

D. When the children of God have thus backſlidden from him, there always follows a relaxation and abatement of mutual love. GOD, on his part, does not, as formerly, manifeſt his loving kindneſs to the ſouls of his people; when they draw near to him in prayer, he covers himſelf as with a cloud; he ſhuts out their prayers; he is deaf to their cries, and returns no anſwers to their petitions. And ſo, on the part of HIS PEOPLE themſelves, there is a decreaſe of affection: their hearts were once inflamed with a love to the Lord Jeſus, which was *ſtronger than death*, and with a *jealouſy as cruel as the grave, the coals of which were coals of fire, which many waters could not quench;* conſtrained by this love, they could do any thing for Chriſt, and were willing to ſuffer the utmoſt ſeverities for his ſake: in the exer-

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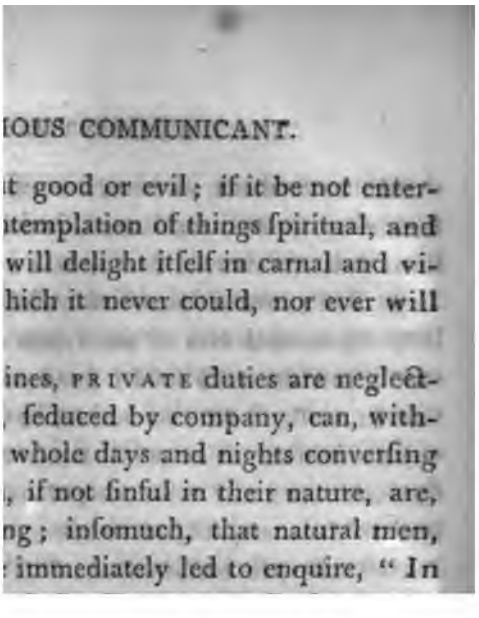
ciſe of this love they gave themſelves unreſervedly to him; and, influenced by it, they endeavoured to bring others alſo to the Saviour; but, by backſliding, they have loſt their firſt love; their deſires after Chriſt are become faint and few, and they are almoſt indifferent about communion with him. This coldneſs of affection damps their zeal, ſtops their mouths, and makes them daſtardly in their maſter's cauſe. And, as might be expected, their Jeſus does not conduct himſelf, on his part, towards them as he did, previous to their declenſion: he does not diſplay the fulneſs of his love to their ſouls; though it be true, that *whom he once loves, he loves to the end*, yet he withholds from ſuch backſliding believers the delightful manifeſtations of it. That face in which they once ſaw ſo many charms, Jeſus now hides from their ſouls; for they have ſlighted his love: it was thus the Lord dealt with the ſpouſe, as appears from her complaint, Song v. 4, "*My beloved has* "*withdrawn himſelf; he put in his hand* by the hole "*of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*"

E. The children of God may decline, with reſpect to their LIVELY HOPES of heaven and eternal ſalvation. Through the weakneſs of their faith and love, their hopes are ſhaken; their ſouls are full of doubts, whether ever they ſhall arrive at the haven of everlaſting felicity: hence, when they meditate on death and eternity, a dread ſeizes them, not knowing what may be their portion in a future world: they are alſo but little exerciſed about heaven; their faith does not as formerly, repreſent as viſible, the things of the inviſible world; for, by not being ſet upon having inward fellowſhip with God, the deſires which they once had of enjoying God face to face, in glory, have more or leſs ceaſed to exiſt. They ſeem, in a



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

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ıtemplation of things ſpiritual, and
will delight itſelf in carnal and vi-
hich it never could, nor ever will

ines, PRIVATE duties are neglect-
, ſeduced by company, can, with-
whole days and nights converſing
, if not ſinful in their nature, are,
ng; inſomuch, that natural men,
immediately led to enquire, "In

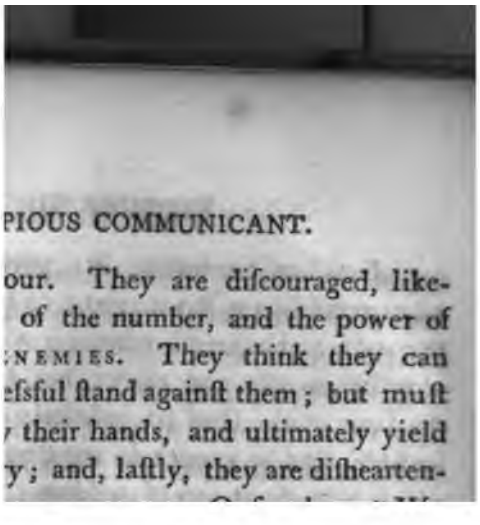
divert them from an employment, in which they once took great delight, and on which their ſpiritual life, in a great meaſure, depended.

b. They are *remiſs* in the duty of prayer; this they once eſteemed a great privilege; in this they once found much pleaſure; but now, prayer has become a thing of courſe, a mere formal exerciſe: there is ſtill, however, too much light in the ſoul, and too deep an impreſſion of the omniſcience and omnipreſence of God, upon the heart, to ſuffer them altogether to quit the practice; but when they pray, it is more from cuſtom, or to quiet conſcience, than from any ſatisfaction they find in the duty; and it is well if they do not ſometimes feel a ſecret pleaſure in being hindered from engaging in it, and rejoice when the work is done.

c. They endeavour to *avoid* the company of the godly; for, being in this unhappy ſtate, they are ſtrangers to themſelves, and, therefore, afraid to converſe with exerciſed Chriſtians, and avoid opening their minds to them on ſpiritual ſubjects.

d. The ſeeds of grace, however, remaining in their hearts, they are ſometimes brought to ſee how low they have fallen, and to be in ſome meaſure affected with the ſight. But how do they improve the conviction? inſtead of duly reflecting on their preſent ſtate, and following the light afforded them, a view of their wretched condition makes them *ſink* into diſcouragement.

They are diſcouraged, in the FIRST place, with reſpect to GOD. They dare not entertain a hope of being reſtored; the ſeparation between God and them appears ſo great, that they conclude he will never receive them again in mercy; but, for their unfaithfulneſs, will exclude them, in his wrath, for



PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

our. They are diſcouraged, like-
of the number, and the power of
NEMIES. They think they can
eſsful ſtand againſt them; but muſt
their hands, and ultimately yield
y; and, laſtly, they are diſhearten-

1. God, in permitting his people to backſlide, ACTS according to his ABSOLUTE ſovereignty; he is not accountable for his actions; all his doings diſplay his majeſty and glory: but if we conſider, at the ſame time, God as infinitely wiſe, we ſhall be ſenſible, that he cannot do any thing without reaſons, which bear the ſtamp of wiſdom; and ſuch reaſons he doubtleſs has for permitting his people to fall into a backſliding ſtate; ſome of which may be the following:

A. To manifeſt his almighty and divine POWER, in preſerving grace alive in the heart, in the midſt of ſo great a declenſion, and thus to diſplay the prevalence of Chriſt's interceſſion, whilſt he prays for his people, that their *faith fail not*, Luke xxii. 32.

B. To exhibit his FAITHFULNESS, and the IMMUTABILITY of his covenant, notwithſtanding the UNFAITHFULNESS of his people; for, be their declenſion ever ſo great, *with the Lord* there is an *appointed time*, in which he will appear *to raiſe again their ſouls that have been bowed down; to fulfil their deſires, and to ſave them.*

C. To WARN others againſt falling into ſuch a ſtate; to PUT them on their guard againſt whatever may lead to it; and to EXCITE them to a tender walk and converſation: but, eſpecially,

2. We muſt look for the cauſes of declenſion IN BELIEVERS THEMSELVES; for God is not *a wilderneſs*, or a *land of darkneſs to Iſrael*, Jer. ii. 31. The cauſes of their declenſion are in themſelves, and they are ſuch as theſe: either,

A. Some AGGRAVATED SIN or SINS, into which they have fallen, and of which they have never repented; and for which they have never ob-

ough the blood of Chriſt. It is a
he experience of ages, that one ſin
makes way for another: this was
id; after his adultery with Bath-
e murder of Uriah.
y have not been DAILY ENGA-
INTERCOURSE WITH GOD, AS A
and in LIVING as it becomes per-
uch a relation to him; they live
e evidences which they may have
ove. When theſe are not diſcern-

of every earthly object; otherwiſe, you may expect to be taught the worth of his viſits by the withdrawing of them.

D. When God has cauſed his people to rejoice; if they have not been careful to PRESERVE the bleſſing, by a holy walk and freſh ſurrender of themſelves to him; if, when this joy has been interrupted, they have not been diligent in ſearching out the cauſe, and ſeeking its reſtoration; or, if they have looked for comfort from ſome other quarter: all theſe are ſo many reaſons why the Lord may ſuffer them to feel that unhappineſs which declenſion in religion always brings in its train.

E. Another cauſe of declenſion in religion is, a YIELDING too much to a SLOTHFUL TEMPER, or too great an INDULGENCE in indolence and inactivity. When religion is alive in the ſoul, we think it not too much to infringe upon the hours appointed to reſt, and to employ them in religious exerciſes, whilſt the morning and evening of every day witneſs our ſecret intercourſe with our God; but when we become inactive, and indulge ourſelves on the lap of eaſe; when the ſervice of God becomes a burden, and duty is neglected; then leanneſs and deadneſs enter into the ſoul; our zeal is cooled, and our religion languiſhes.

F. The children of God have ſometimes DEPENDED too much upon their FIRST exerciſes, and upon what the Lord has done for them in former times. To look back on former experiences is profitable to Chriſtians, when it excites them to walk humbly with God; but when it renders them careleſs, and makes them think, "Though we are unfaithful, *God* "*is faithful;* and if a work of grace has ever been "begun in our hearts, of which we have good

be continued;" to make ſuch an uſe
s is very dangerous; it leads to ſe-
ecurity ends in backſliding.
e cauſes of declenſion in religion;
n STEPS by which a ſoul is led into
o great a departure from God can-
once, or by the commiſſion of one
rought on by degrees; hence it is
t the Chriſtian knows not how he
length in backſliding; his caſe is
ſom friends who have lived toge-

We would not be underſtood to inſinuate, that the inveſtigation of divine truths is a mean to impede our progreſs in religion; ſo far from this, it is to be conſidered as a moſt happy mean of cauſing us to advance in our journey towards heaven; but through the depravity of the human heart, and the ſubtilty of our ſpiritual enemies, it is poſſible, that what, in other circumſtances, might be very profitable, may, by being miſuſed, prove very hurtful. And this is the caſe, when we devote the greateſt part of our time, to making deep reſearches into truths, which, though important in themſelves, are not, however, ſuch as immediately tend to affect the heart: or, when we do not apply thoſe eſſential truths, with which we are acquainted, to our own ſouls, nor make any enquiry what influence they have upon the mind, nor what improvement we make by them, in virtue, and true piety.

3. After this, they begin to WITHDRAW themſelves from the COMPANY of thoſe who fear the Lord, eſpecially, from ſuch as would deal faithfully with them, and whoſe converſation might tend to awaken them. Nor is this to be wondered at; for when the heart is barren and empty, the mouth muſt be ſtopped.

4. At length they become ſo ENTANGLED, and LOST in the world, that they loſe ſight of God. One is involved in a multiplicity of buſineſs; another is enſnared by riches and proſperity; or by honour and preferment; he is now expoſed to the company of the world, and tempted to conform to its cuſtoms and manners. Thus Chriſtians are led to indulge themſelves in that which they had once renounced; the communication between God and their ſouls is interrupted; their boldneſs in the cauſe

o more; a holy and jealous God,
leaſure with their conduct, with-
fluences, and permits them to go
rther aſtray. Nor would they
thoſe devious paths, unleſs the
d were ſtretched out to bring them
of life.

but many, on a ſtrict examination
, muſt be obliged to confeſs, with
as been their very caſe. Happy
is in time, before they fall into a

thee in the dark and dreary path of affliction? Didſt thou not then receive the tokens of his love and goodneſs? Hath he ever left or forſaken thee? Art thou compelled to anſwer and to ſay, "He never "was to *me a wilderneſs, a land of darkneſs:* but "goodneſs, truth, and righteouſneſs have marked all "his dealings with me: the guilt lies at my own "door. It was my ſin, my inattention, my folly, "which has carried me ſo far from my God. And "what advice can now be given me, what direction "can be afforded, with reſpect to my reſtoration. For "I am fearful that, unleſs I am ſpeedily helped, I "ſhall continue in my preſent ſtate, yea, be found "in a worſe condition, and go to ſuch lengths in "backſliding, that all hopes of recovery, and of be-"ing received in mercy, muſt be abandoned.

We grant that thy caſe is truly deplorable; but ſtill there is hope concerning thee: there have been others in the like condition, whom God, as by a ſecond converſion, hath reſtored. Be not, then, diſcouraged, nor give thyſelf over to deſpondency: this would render thee unfit to uſe the means we are about to preſcribe to thee.

Art thou, then, diſtreſſed by reaſon of thy departure from God? And is it thy deſire to return to him? Certain MEANS are to be USED, and certain THINGS are to be guarded againſt.

1. Seriouſly CONSIDER thy miſerable SITUATION: view it in all its aggravated circumſtances; reflect, how greatly thou haſt diſhonoured God, by a conduct, which evinces that thou didſt eſteem his ſervice hard, unſatisfying, and not conducive to thy happineſs; and the way to heaven, not a narrow, but a broad and eaſy one;—call to mind how much thou haſt grieved and offended the people of God,

which Jeſus looks upon as a ſin to which not a little malignity is attached; what a ſtumbling-block, thou haſt been to the world, and what *occaſion thou haſt given to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme.* Conſider, how wretched a life thou art leading thyſelf; "Thou haſt God for thy father, and thy covenant God; but thou haſt no freedom of acceſs to him; the avenue to the throne of grace appears to be cloſed, and thou ſeemeſt like one caſt away.—Thou haſt Jeſus for thy friend and huſband; but there ſubſiſts ſo great a difference between thee and him, that thou art afraid to profeſs thy love to him; he ſeems to be ſtrange to thee; becauſe thy heart accuſes thee of dividing thy love between him and the world.—Thou haſt the holy Spirit to abide in thee, to counſel and direct thee; but thou doſt not experience his comforting influences; becauſe thou haſt grieved him: and thus, thou liveſt as one forſaken. The means of grace profit thee but little. Doſt thou meet with difficulties? thou art full of anxiety, of fear, and diſtreſs; and thou haſt not confidence to *caſt thy burdens upon the Lord.*—Does death ſtare thee in the face, and doſt thou reflect on the horrors of the grave? thy ſoul is diſquieted within thee; becauſe the foundations of thy hope lie deeply buried beneath the rubbiſh of thy corruptions; thou art afraid to believe that thy latter end will be peace.

Conſider all theſe things with deliberation, and reflect that the longer thou continueſt thus, the worſe thy caſe muſt be; for the pious emotions, which thou, yet at times, doſt experience, will gradually decreaſe, and thy religion dwindle into mere formality.

2. Often call to mind the COMMANDS and ADMONITIONS which God has given in his word, to EXCITE thee to return to him. Hear what he ſays,

Jer. iii. 22, *Return ye backſliding children, and I will heal your backſlidings:* See alſo verſe 1ſt, *Thou haſt played the harlot, with many lovers; yet return again unto me ſaith the Lord.*—The Lord Jeſus addreſſed the Church of Epheſus, which had left her firſt love, ſaying, *Remember therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy firſt works,* Rev. ii. 4, 5.

O, BACKSLIDING Chriſtian! the Lord is merciful and gracious; and upon thy coming to him ſorrowing, and diſtreſſed for thy ſins, he will forgive thine iniquities; he will not remember them, nor upbraid thee with them; but will receive thee again in covenant love. Though thou haſt been unfaithful, the ETERNAL abideth true to his promiſes; the covenant is unchangeable; and becauſe it is a covenant of grace, thy God will manifeſt to thee that he is gracious. Would Jeſus, in no wiſe caſt thee out, when, at the time of your firſt converſion by faith, thou fleddeſt to him for refuge, neither will he now reject thee, when thou comeſt to him, as it were by a ſecond converſion, with a wounded, bleeding heart.—There is no miſery ſo great, no diſeaſe ſo deſperate, but Jeſus the Saviour can remove and heal it.

3. Has thine heart been affected by divine and gracious invitations to return?—do not reſt here; but ſet apart certain times and ſeaſons for ſecret FASTING and PRAYER: we are perſuaded, that very ſeldom, if ever, the Lord brings back thoſe who have ſo far backſlidden, but by means of afflictive viſitations; ſuch as ſevere ſickneſs, and other diſtreſſing diſpenſations.—This is proper on GOD'S PART; his glory and honour make it neceſſary that he ſhould

d of ſin; eſpecially, in his own
ough he hath redeemed them from
tion, yet he may write ſuch bitter
n, that they may ſay, in the lan-
" *We ſuffer thy terrors; we are*
xxviii. 15.—He is indeed a forgiv-
l he will avenge himſelf for the
ne by his people, inſomuch that
taſte the bitter effects of their ini-
not a clear example of this in the
man after God's own heart? He

ſion of face, thy baſe and unworthy conduct; in the language of Ezra, exclaim, " *O my God! I am aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my face to thee,* Ezra ix. 6; and with David, ſay, " *Againſt thee, thee only, have I ſinned, and done this evil in thy ſight; that thou mighteſt be juſtified when thou ſpeakeſt, and be clear when thou judgeſt.*"

B. Having confeſſed thy guilt, GO to the throne of grace, in prayer and ſupplication; preſent thyſelf before the Lord, and let him ſee thy countenance, defiled and deformed as it may be, and ſay, " Lord, I neither can nor will conceal from thee my ſituation; ſinful as I am, I come to look unto thee for reſtoring grace: I have long enough ſtrayed from thee; I would now rather here die at thy feet, than continue at a diſtance from thee, or remain any longer in my ſin."

C. Does thy conſcience ACCUSE thee?—go, like *the ſervants of Benhadad, as with ſackcloth upon thy loins, and ropes about* thy head, and ſay to God, " I *have heard of thee, O thou King of Iſrael, that thou art a merciful King;* and, therefore, I come with a trembling hope to receive thy mercy." And in the words of the Pſalmiſt, addreſs thy God, ſaying, " Lord, be *merciful to me; and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my tranſgreſſions: pardon mine iniquities, for they are great.*"

D. Endeavour to EXERCISE faith upon the Lord Jeſus; fly for refuge to his atoning blood; caſt thyſelf anew into his arms; and thus give to him the glory due to his grace, and to the efficacy of his blood, as being ſufficient to cleanſe from all ſin; and then ſurrender to him thy ſinful, thine impure, thy wandering heart: he is the great Phyſician; he can, yea, he will heal all thy ſpiritual maladies.

OUS COMMUNICANT.

RENEW thy covenant with God,
ver covenanted with him before.
thy mind, whether thou haſt ever
nant with the Lord, what can ſo
m, as to engage again and again in
f ſurrendering thyſelf uncondition-
to him, to be his for ever?
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hee in peace, and manifeſt his lov-
ſoul; for haſt thou not often ſuf-
o thee, without hearkening to his

concomitant joys? we further remark, that there are CERTAIN things, againſt which thou haſt need of being on thy guard.

1. WATCH with all attention againſt THOSE SINS which were the cauſe of thy declenſion in religion: hate them with a holy hatred. Do they aſſault thee? oppoſe and wage an eternal war againſt them.

2. WATCH not only againſt a SLOTHFUL TEMPER, which makes *the hands to hang down;* but ſee to it, *that the hands and feeble knees be lifted up, and make ſtraight paths for thy feet.*

3. WATCH againſt NEGLIGENCE in the uſe of means which may tend to awaken and excite thee to action. Attend with diligence to all the duties of religion; ſearch the precious word of God; let the pious be thy companions and boſom friends; though thou mayeſt have ſeparated thyſelf from their ſociety, they will receive thee again in love, upon evidencing on thy part, an inclination to aſſociate again with them; for thee, their prayers will aſcend to the throne; and by their counſel and advice, they will ſeek to bring thee back to thy Redeemer and thy God.

4. Above all, WATCH againſt making ſinners, who know not, who love not, but oppoſe Jeſus, thy CONSTANT companions; hold intercourſe with them only when neceſſity demands it; for to walk with ſuch, and to go hand in hand with them, might have the fatal tendency of leading thee farther aſtray from thy God.

5. WATCH againſt a DEPENDENCE upon thine own ſtrength: this was the cauſe of Peter's fall. At all times acknowledge that thou art inſufficient of thyſelf to do any thing acceptable to God; and that, unleſs the JEHOVAH place, every moment, everlaſt-

hee, thou wilt, like the wandering
r from thy fold. Look then con-
us, in every ſituation; and make uſe
ly Saviour and Redeemer.

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ian ſhould act, with reſpect to the
the Lord?" whether he may ven-
or whether it be beſt for him to ab-
; it is a truth, founded upon ex-
perſon ever made any advancement
but rather declined in religion, by

the healing of nations.—Go with thy wounds to the great and good Samaritan, that he may pour into them the oil of joy, and adminiſter to thee the wine of conſolation.—Thus to come to the table, will be to approach with profit to thy ſoul.

3. CAST thyſelf ANEW upon thy God, firmly reſolving in thy Jeſus' ſtrength to be more faithful to him; to be more zealous in promoting his beſt intereſts than thou haſt hitherto been, and to delight more in *keeping his righteous ſtatutes.*

But perhaps thou wilt reply, "all thoſe means "are good, when the foundation ſtands ſtrong; but I "am afraid that I am not within the covenant; that "my faith is but a temporary faith; and that I am one "of thoſe of whom Paul ſpeaks, *who having been once* "*enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and* "*of the good word of God, and the powers of the world* "*to come;* but have fallen away."—To ſuch an one we muſt ſay, it is, indeed, no wonder that thou art in darkneſs and in fear; for it is not a light matter to forſake God, as thou haſt done; to have been ſo unfaithful to him, and to have given ſuch cauſe for the blaſpheming of his holy name; but ſtill, in the midſt of all this, there may be ſeen ſome evidences of grace: for although the ſpouſe *ſlept, her heart waked.*—We aſk thee, then,

1. When thou calmly lookeſt back to the time when thou firſt gaveſt thyſelf to Jeſus, art thou not filled with ſhame, on account of thy conduct ſince that period? and is it not, at the ſame time, the deſire of thy ſoul, that it *were with thee as in months paſt; when the candle of the Lord ſhone upon thee,* and when by the light of it, thou didſt walk through the dark ſhades that ſurrounded thee?

2. Doſt thou not experience a HATRED of ſin, and

a deſire to depart from it; eſpecially from thoſe ſins which were the procuring cauſes of thy declenſion in the life of faith? doſt thou not bluſh to reflect on them, and condemn thyſelf for thy folly, in chooſing thoſe things which tend to deprive thee of the friendſhip of thy God.

3. When the Lord Jeſus, in all his preciouſneſs and beauty, is placed before thee, canſt thou not profeſs that thou haſt at leaſt ſome love for him, and ſome deſires of ſoul after him?

4. Is it not the wiſh of thy heart to be recovered from thy declenſion, and to return to the Lord? would it not produce real joy and ſatisfaction in thy heart, if the Lord were to bring thee back to thy former ſituation, though it were even through the furnace of affliction, rather than to continue departing from thy Father and thy Redeemer: is it not the language of thy ſoul; "*Lord, I have gone aſtray like a loſt ſheep; ſeek thy ſervant: for I do not forget thy commandments?*"

Doſt thou experience theſe things? they are evidences that the root of the matter is in thee.—Make uſe, then, of the means which we have faithfully pointed out to thee, and we truſt that thou wilt not uſe them in vain; but that the Lord will accompany them with his bleſſing.

Let us now, in the laſt place, endeavour to apply this ſubject to our ſeveral caſes reſpectively; but perhaps it may be aſked, "Why the backſlidings of "God's people ſhould be ſo fully held up to view? "for men in general have no conceptions of theſe "things, and few of the children of God are in ſuch a "ſtate as has been deſcribed; beſides, it proves a "ſtumbling-block to the world."

We do indeed wiſh that the faults of God's people

could be concealed; but the world cannot but often obſerve them; and we apprehend that ſuch a repreſentation of them as has been given, may tend to convince mankind, that the way which leads to life is a narrow way, ſince even thoſe who are within the bonds of the covenant, when they go aſtray, have to experience much diſtreſs and anxiety, before they are again reſtored; this muſt make them think, "If "ſuch be the caſe of thoſe who are ſo precious in the "eyes of the Lord, what muſt become of us, who are "yet in our ſins?"

O, careleſs ſinner! be alarmed—*If theſe things be done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* Will God viſit his PEOPLE with the rod, when they ſin; muſt *they* taſte the bitter effects of their tranſgreſſions who have a ſurety to deliver them from everlaſting puniſhment; who have God for their rock and their portion; who have Jeſus as their king; and the Spirit abiding in them?—O, what will be thy wretchedneſs, when thou ſhalt ſuffer the puniſhment of everlaſting *deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?* "*If the righteous be ſcarcely ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?*"

Believe it, ſin muſt be ſeen and mourned over, either in the preſent or in a future life: if thou art not diſtreſſed on account of it in this world, thou wilt feel the wrath of God, the puniſhment due unto it, in the next; ſeek then to obtain a knowledge of the dreadful conſequences attendant upon the tranſgreſſion of the divine law; plead with God to work, in thy heart, repentance unto life, that, forſaking thy ſin, thou mayeſt walk in the ways of wiſdom and righteouſneſs.

OUS COMMUNICANT.

is peculiarly uſeful to the PEOPLE

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nd how inſenſibly one may back-

ſion. The firſt ſtep is, perhaps, almoſt imperceptible: but no one can tell how ſoon the ſtrength of indwelling ſin, ſet in motion by external enemies, may lead you aſtray. It often happens, that but a little period elapſes between perſons being hurried into ſin, and becoming inclined to neglect the duties which the holy religion of Jeſus preſcribes.

B. ALWAYS let it be deeply IMPRESSED on your minds, that ye have to do with a holy God, who cannot take pleaſure in iniquity; and that, therefore, the ſmalleſt ſin, if it be not mourned over, muſt produce an eſtrangement between you and your God. Suffer then no ſin to remain in you, unrepented of; but fly daily to the blood of Jeſus, and plead for an intereſt in his interceſſion.

C. NEVER, without an abſolute neceſſity, be found at thoſe places where ye may be in danger of being led aſtray. Had Peter not been preſent in the hall of the high prieſt, he would not ſo eaſily have fallen into the ſin of denying his Maſter. Are ye at any time brought into ſuch circumſtances? then, under a deep impreſſion of your moral impotency, be much in prayer to God for preſerving grace.

D. BE conſtantly in the practice of holding communion with God in ſecret. Let ſome portion of every day be ſpared from worldly buſineſs, for this exerciſe. There is no better mean to preſerve you from ſin.

E. FORSAKE *not the aſſembling of yourſelves together*, but endeavour to excite one another to love, and to good works. And do ye meet with any who are beginning to backſlide? pity them, and attend to the exhortation of Paul,—*Brethren, if a man be "overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual reſtore*

e ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy-
lſo tempted." Gal. vi. 1.
ch with your own hearts; attend
oceeds from them; this will make
nd immediately enable you to diſ-
gin to ſtray from God. "*Keep*
iligence; for out of it are the iſſues
ou are thus exerciſed, the Lord,
ll manifeſt his faithfulneſs to you,
ve you from declenſion, but cauſe
r way rejoicing, till you arrive at

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Lecture VIII.

ON COVENANTING WITH GOD, PREPARATORY TO AN APPROACH TO THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

AS the ſigns and ſeals of the covenant can be uſed, with profit, only by thoſe who are intereſted in the covenant itſelf, we conceived that it would be advantageous, after having treated ſo minutely as we have done, in the preceding lectures on the doctrine of faith, to invite your attention, now, TO THE EXERCISES OF A SOUL in the act of COVENANTING WITH THE LORD; and to the MANNER in which the BELIEVER yields his conſent to all the terms of the covenant; not only when FIRST he enters within its bonds, but AFTERWARDS, on every renewal of it.

To meditate on a ſubject ſo glorious, divine, and intereſting, is at all times profitable; both to direct and animate the redeemed of the Lord: and, with the divine bleſſing, to unfold the nature of the covenant, to the view of thoſe who are yet ſtrangers to it, and ſweetly to compel them to enter within its bonds.—But, on an occaſion like the preſent, when public-

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nd on the ſolemnities of the Holy
upper, where we look for the pre-
he maſter of the feaſt, and great
ınt, to have this ſubject ſet before
, is highly uſeful and neceſſary :
of the covenant is glorified ; and
oy the exquiſite delight which fel-
, as our covenant God, affords.
to this copious ſubject, we muſt

elect of God, as long as they are

VII. ENDEAVOUR to remove the difficulties which may ariſe in the minds of God's covenant people; to the end that they be encouraged and comforted.

VIII. SHOW how neceſſary and uſeful this ſubject is, to prepare the heart for a profitable approach to the Holy Supper of our Lord.

IX. *Cloſe*, with an applicatory addreſs, both to SINNERS, and to the PEOPLE of God.

As the ſeveral matters propoſed for diſcuſſion, are ſo copious and important, it cannot be expected that we can do juſtice to each, if all are diſcuſſed in a ſingle lecture. We ſhall at preſent, therefore, only invite your attention to the THREE FIRST, and to the TWO LAST, which have been ſpecified in the above diviſion.—Thoſe which remain, will be treated of in the ſucceeding lecture.

We proceed then, FIRST, to ſhow that all SINNERS, even the ELECT, are by nature UNABLE and UNWILLING to enter into covenant with God; yea, perfectly INDIFFERENT about the matter, and what is ſtill more, OPPOSED to it.

1. They are UNABLE; for as by nature they are wholly incapacitated to do any good thing, ſo they cannot ſubmit to the requiſitions of God's covenant; ſin and Satan hold them ſo faſt in their chains and fetters, that they may be ſaid to be *captives at their will.* Were the covenant propoſed to them, and its contents preſented in ever ſo clear a light, they are not in a condition to ſee its precioufneſs; for they have not the *eyes of their underſtanding enlightened*, and conſequently, the *things of the Spirit of God are fooliſhneſs to them.*

2. They are not only unable, but UNWILLING alſo, to enter into covenant with God: for,

ſo infatuated by the world, and ſo
power of corrupt nature, that no-
ıem from their carnal purſuits : no
ncline them to purſue a different

demands which the covenant makes
s bonds, are diametrically oppoſed
rts, and require that indulgence in
ıtirely reſtricted ; and therefore they
part from us, for we deſire not the
ays : and with Iſrael, *who profaned*
the Lord, they exclaim, *behold!*

truths the moſt heavenly and divine, and make them the objects of their deriſion: if all who are unconverted go not to ſuch lengths, yet they evince their oppoſition to God in this, that they refuſe the offers of mercy which are made to them in the goſpel, and enter not within the covenant until, at laſt, overcome by the invincible and ſweetly attractive influences of the Holy Ghoſt, they are *compelled to come in.*

This leads us to the SECOND thing propoſed, which was, to ſhow WHAT GOD THE HOLY GHOST DOES, in order to influence ſuch impotent, unwilling, unconcerned and rebellious ſinners, to enter within the bonds of the covenant, by yielding their ſincere conſent to it. The operations performed by the Holy Spirit, are the following;

1. God the Holy Ghoſt, finding the ſinner dead, BREATHES into him THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE; and what the ſoul is to the body, that the Spirit is to the ſoul—a FOUNTAIN OF LIFE. In conſequence of having this living principle given him, he experiences affections and emotions, very different from what he ever before felt, and is exerciſed altogether in another manner: this vital principle, and the effects which it produces, are not immediately aſcertained with preciſion by the ſubject of them, "whether they have proceeded from the Spirit of God, or whether they be ſparks which a conſcience convinced of ſin hath enkindled;" but the ſoul afterwards diſtinctly diſcovers the work to be of God, by his ſucceeding operations: for,

2. The Holy Ghoſt having excited life in the ſoul, cauſes that principle to become ACTIVE. The ſoul is awakened into attention; the ſinner, like the prodigal ſon, begins to *come to himſelf.* If he attend on the

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hears with another ear, thoſe truths
eternal happineſs; to the intereſt-
he miſery of man by nature, and
nfold ſalvation to be of God in
iſtens with the eager attention of
at his eternal ALL depends upon
them: we are certain that every
every awakened ſinner will confirm
d ſay, "yes, it is ſo; formerly I
God; I went up to the courts of
what I read, made little or no im-

" to all that God hath declared in his word, concern-
" ing ſinners; that they are vile, unclean, rebels to
" his government, and enemies both to his law and
" goſpel;—Now I am convinced that whatever God
" in his word declares, is truth; I once thought that
" I was not ſo great a ſinner; I once did not feel
" my miſery; I thought that all was well; but now
" I clearly ſee that I erred in judgment, and that my
" ſins are of a ſcarlet colour, and of a crimſon dye;
" that my condition is deplorable: that I am the chief
" of ſinners." And, beloved, this dreadful diſcovery produces ſuch an effect upon the heart, that the ſinner is ſo diſtreſſed, diſquieted, aſhamed, and humbled before God, that perhaps, burſting into tears, he exclaims, " *I periſh, what ſhall I do to be ſaved*; if I " continue as I am, *I am loſt for ever.*"

4. At this moment, the Holy Ghoſt enables the ſoul to ſee the FULNESS, the ALL-SUFFICIENCY, and PRECIOUSNESS which there IS IN JESUS; but this is not always ſeen immediately in the cleareſt manner; for, whilſt the ſinner is ſo oppreſſed by a ſight and feeling ſenſe of his miſery; he cannot diſcover that fulneſs which Chriſt poſſeſſes, as it really is; but yet, even at this time, the Holy Spirit enables him to diſcover ſome manifeſtations of the mediatorial glories of the divine Redeemer, to the end that he may not diſtruſt, or fall into deſpair. He is next brought by the ſame divine agent, to a diſcovery that *God hath thoughts of peace towards him*; that there is a *covenant of grace*; that it is eſtabliſhed for ſinners—for great ſinners—for the greateſt of ſinners; and, what is more, that the Eternal invites him to accept of it: and that the only queſtion propoſed is, whether he cordially chooſes the way which God hath exhibited in his

ıt then God, on his part, is wil-
in mercy.
rine agent, having made theſe glo-
o the ſinner, EXCITES in his ſoul
nd *thirſting* after God, Chriſt, and
ıis hunger and thirſt uſually riſes
ıs to make him exclaim, " *My ſoul*
my fleſh longeth for God; yea, as
er the water-brooks, ſo panteth my
d the living God."—The hunger-
ɔul hath its deſires ſo ardent, that

any longer without the covenant; it therefore enters within its bonds, and ſays AMEN to every propoſition it makes.—O, ſays the ſoul, "If to enter into the co-"venant, be to have the heart diſpoſed to yield a cor-"dial conſent to Chriſt's offers, and to approve of "God's teſtimony, I will, with Rebecca, alſo ſay, I "*will follow the man;* and with queen Eſther, I *will* "*go to the* King, and *touch his ſceptre, and if I periſh,* "*I periſh.*"

7. The ſoul being thus inclined to conſent to all that the covenant propoſes, the Holy Spirit uſually gives it ſome ASSURANCE that it hath really entered into covenant with God, and that its exerciſes are upright and ſincere; and this he does,

A. ORDINARILY; when he enables the ſoul to ſee, after it has examined into its true ſituation, by the marks laid down in the word, that its various exerciſes are in every reſpect conſonant to thoſe marks, and conſequently are of the ſame kind with thoſe which God's covenant people poſſeſs.

B. EXTRAORDINARILY; when the Spirit of God addreſſes the ſoul, ſaying, "I will not only "cauſe thee to ſee by the eye of faith; but I will "permit thee to TASTE, and to prove from actual "experience, what it is to have an intereſt in ſuch a "covenant God; in ſo precious a Jeſus: and in a "covenant which is *ſo well ordered and ſure.* Wilt "thou, by a kind of prelibation, *eat* of the cluſters "*of grapes;* the firſt fruits of the heavenly Canaan? "behold, I give *thee the white ſtone, the hidden man-*"*na:* full and perfect fruition is reſerved for you in "heaven; ye are children of God, and therefore, "heirs of an eternal inheritance;"—The ſoul, receiving ſuch extraordinary aſſurance, inſtead of being elated by pride, is humbled, and rejoices; is filled

with aſtoniſhment, and is grateful in a degree which is better experienced than expreſſed.

8. The Spirit having thus given aſſurances to the ſoul of its intereſt in God, and the bleſſings of the covenant, proceeds, in the next place, to ADORN it; that it may be a pleaſing BRIDE for Chriſt, he makes it glorious, by cauſing it to partake of the divine nature; by implanting in it thoſe graces, by which it is made to reſemble God, and is *perfect in the comelineſs, which he puts* on it, Ezek. xvi. 14;—Hence Jeſus can ſay to the ſoul, "*thou art my ſiſter, my ſpouſe, my dove, my undefiled;*" and addreſs it in the words of Solomon, Cant. vi. 5; and iv. 7—*Turn away thine eyes from me;* for they *have overcome me.—Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no ſpot in thee.*

9. Upon this, the Holy Spirit gives the ſoul a holy BOLDNESS TO KEEP up an intercourſe with God, as a covenant God: it is enabled to ſee, "*that the ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him;* that he manifeſts his love to them, and makes the light of his countenance to ſhine upon them; hence, the ſoul is encouraged to unboſom itſelf to him; to confeſs its various defections from him; to plead his covenant, and to remind him of his promiſes: this is that *drawing near unto God,* which the Pſalmiſt repreſents as being ſo good and delightful. In addition to all this, the ſoul finds "*that the name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower, into which the righteous run, and are ſafe.*"

10. Hath the Spirit carried on the work of grace in the heart to all theſe lengths? of one thing we may be aſſured, he WILL NEVER FORSAKE THE WORK OF HIS HAND; but will conſtantly keep his hand upon it, and that in ſo affectionate, paternal,

and endearing a manner, that, although the ſoul, which hath entered within the bonds of the covenant, may fall into ſin, he gives it the beſt of aſſurances that he will never totally and finally depart from it, but, upon ſincere confeſſion of its guilt, will receive it in mercy again; ſo that if, at any time, it be *viſited with the rod*, even that ſhall *work for good*, and be attended with this peculiar advantage, the bringing of the ſoul nearer to its maker. But,

11. Laſtly, the Holy Spirit not only leads and guides all who are in covenant with God, in all the viciſſitudes of life, but he has alſo undertaken to BRING them over the Jordan of death, and land them on the peaceful ſhores of the celeſtial Canaan, where all the benefits of the covenant are enjoyed in their higheſt perfection.

See thus, the work of God's Spirit, not only as it reſpects the entrance of the believer into covenant with God, but as it is diſplayed, through life, and in the hour when his nature diſſolves.

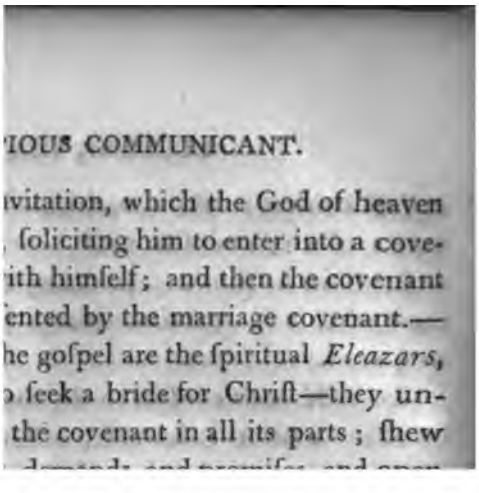
We now come to the THIRD and principal part of our ſubject; which was, particularly to ſhew in what conſiſts THE SINNER'S CONSENT TO THE COVENANT.—To do this, we muſt,

I. Inquire what it ſuppoſes:

II. Show the nature of this conſent, which the ſoul yields, and,

III. Point out when a ſoul may be conſidered as yielding ſuch conſent.

A. It is SUPPOSED, when we ſpeak of the ſoul's conſenting to the covenant, "that God, as the God of the covenant, makes a FREE and FULL OFFER of grace and ſalvation unto ALL SINNERS that live under the goſpel, upon the terms ſtipulated in the word: in this view, the whole of the ſacred oracles may be



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ivitation, which the God of heaven
ſoliciting him to enter into a cove-
ith himſelf; and then the covenant
ented by the marriage covenant.—
he goſpel are the ſpiritual *Eleazars*,
ſeek a bride for Chriſt—they un-
the covenant in all its parts; ſhew

its full conſent to the covenant.—The peculiar NATURE of which conſent muſt

B. Now be ſhown. In doing this, we ſhall firſt ſhow what it is, and then enlarge on its ſeveral PROPERTIES.

To yield one's conſent to the covenant, may be defined: "a rational, humble, believing, and internal "reception or embracing of the covenant in all its "parts, as well its conditions as promiſes, by the will "and the heart."

Thus to conſent to the covenant, is eſſentially the ſame as what we term to enter into covenant with God; ſo that to enter into covenant, is nothing more than ſaying AMEN to the terms which God propoſes in the covenant, or manifeſting an inclination or willingneſs to give ourſelves over to God in Chriſt.—But let us now attend to each of the above particulars: we have ſaid that the ſoul, in covenanting with God,

1. Yields a RATIONAL conſent; but, in making the obſervation, let not thoſe whoſe knowledge of divine truths is confined within narrow limits, have their fears alarmed, as if we would inſinuate that none can enter into covenant with God, but thoſe who have the moſt diſtinct and enlarged views of ſpiritual things. No: doubtleſs many have been for years within the bonds of the covenant, and now are in glory, who have never been able, with preciſion, to point out the circumſtances of time and place, in which they covenanted with Jehovah; and the reaſons why they could not deſignate the one or the other, might have been either their WANT of KNOWLEDGE ſufficient to convince them that what they experienced at the time was really covenanting with God; or UNBELIEF, by which they dared not preſume to engage in a work ſo ſolemn, or to hold an intercourſe with God ſo familiar:—however,

iis, the ſoul covenanting with God,
nſent; ſeeing God deals with it in a
for as ſoon as it is brought under
ains to a knowledge of God, of it-
ays of God: the underſtanding be-
ened, the ſoul judges of ſpiritual
ently from what it formerly did.
ow formed is upon the moſt ſolid
udgment proceeding from the deep-
ruth; and in this manner the ſoul
nant, is perſuaded both of the fitneſs

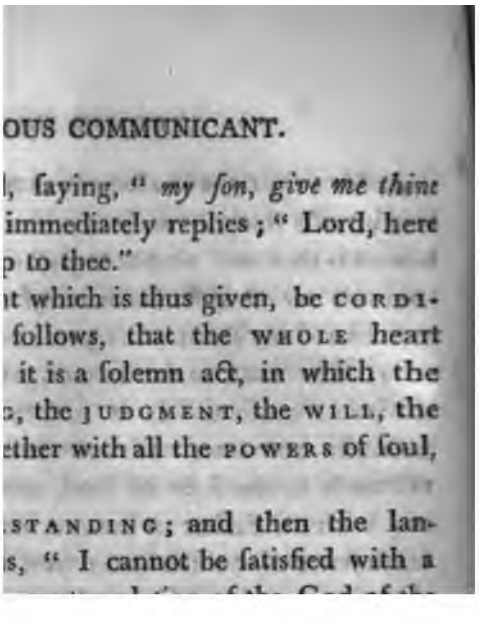
ſinner is conſtrained to ſeek God for grace; but in all this he acts freely; for God is the former of the ſpirit which is in man; and becauſe he hath formed it, ſo, like clay which is in the hand of the potter, he may mould and incline it at his pleaſure. He inclines the unwilling heart to his ſervice, and makes it to act freely.

A. In OPPOSING SIN, the WORLD and SATAN; as much devoted as the ſoul once was to theſe, ſo much it now deſires to forſake, and bid them a final adieu; feeling no conſtraint, and acting perfectly free in the matter, it expreſſes itſelf thus; "I do not leave "my ſinful purſuits becauſe I am forced, but becauſe "I will; to me the world has loſt its charms; its "pleaſures and amuſements ſo far from delighting, "they diſguſt; I am averſe to them."

B. As the heart is now inclined, freely, to relinquiſh the ſervice of ſin, ſo it is made willing to CHOOSE GOD and CHRIST; and to ENGAGE in his ſervice.—The ſoul can now ſay, "I chooſe the ways of godlineſs; not in conſequence of any compulſion, or merely becauſe, from my relation to him as a creature, I am ſacredly obligated ſo to do; but becauſe I feel my heart ſweetly inclined to them; and if there were no eternity, no ſalvation, nor condemnation depending, to induce ſuch a choice, I ſee ſo much excellency in God, ſo much preciouſneſs in the Lord Jeſus, and ſo much ſatisfaction to be derived from his ſervice, that I cannot any longer refrain, but muſt, with the Pſalmiſt, cry out, "*I love thee, O Lord, my ſtrength.*"

3. The conſent which the ſoul yields to the covenant, is a CORDIAL one; by which we mean,

A. That it is not only a conſent of the mouth, but alſo of the HEART.—The God of the covenant



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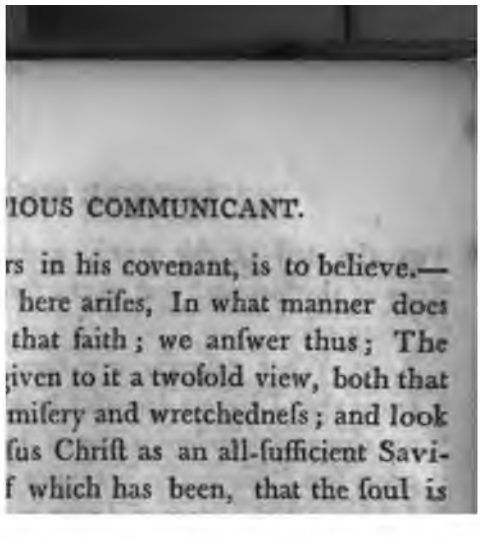
l, ſaying, " *my ſon, give me thine*
immediately replies; " Lord, here
p to thee."
ıt which is thus given, be CORDI-
follows, that the WHOLE heart
it is a ſolemn act, in which the
, the JUDGMENT, the WILL, the
ther with all the POWERS of ſoul,
STANDING; and then the lan-
s, " I cannot be ſatisfied with a

e. Yes, ſays the perſon covenanting with God, it is my will, that not only my ſoul be active for God, but alſo that my BODY engage in his ſervice; and that *all my members* become *inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God*, Rom. vi. 13.

4. The ſoul, in covenanting with God, yields a HUMBLE conſent.—It is not to be expreſſed how humble, how low, and how contemptible it feels itſelf to be in the ſight of God, even whilſt it is dealing with its Father in heaven with the boldneſs and confidence of a child—at a view of its own unworthineſs, its pride falls, and it expreſſes itſelf in language not foreign to this, "O, LORD, WHAT IS THY "SERVANT! but having heard that thou wilt look "upon the poor, and that thou wilt receive in mer-"cy the helpleſs, and thoſe ſenſible of their barren-"neſs and unfruitfulneſs; and feeling that in myſelf "I am nothing, and have nothing, I am impelled "to caſt myſelf as a poor beggar before thy throne; "I come to thee, as the humble publican, ſcarcely "daring to *lift up mine eyes towards heaven;* I cannot "refrain from adapting to myſelf the language of the "centurion, and ſaying, *Lord, I am not worthy that "thou ſhouldſt come under my roof;* and ſenſible as I "am of being by nature the vileſt of the vile; if I "venture to aſk a bleſſing at thy hands, it will be in "the humble language of the woman of Canaan; "Lord, let *the crumbs* of divine grace be diſpenſed to "me, *a dog.*"—Such frames of mind are peculiarly acceptable to God; they are like the bluſhes on the countenance of the bride, which produce the pleaſing effect of rendering her ſtill more lovely; where they are found, the ſoul is humbled in the duſt, but Jehovah is exalted, as *all and in all.*

5. It is a BELIEVING conſent. For, to conſent



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rs in his covenant, is to believe.—
here arifes, In what manner does
that faith; we anfwer thus; The
given to it a twofold view, both that
mifery and wretchednefs; and look
fus Chrift as an all-fufficient Savi-
f which has been, that the foul is

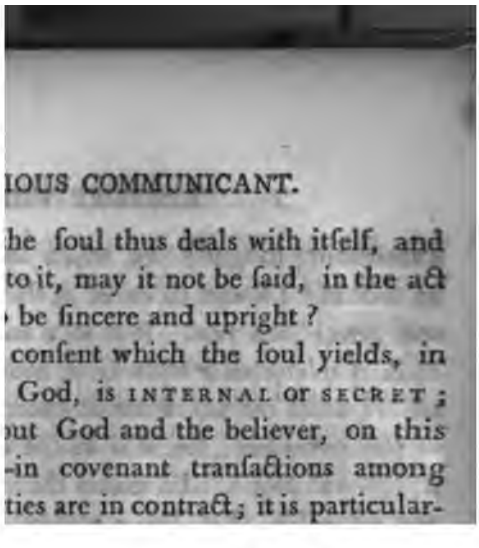
" to the teſt of thy word, and of the experien-
" ces of thy people, and to the ſcrutiny of thine all-
" ſeeing eye."

A. " What reſpects my own CONSCIENCE, I
" know that I have a deceitful heart, and that in ma-
" ny things it condemns me of having various and
" great ſins; but in this it cannot condemn me, that
" I have acted a deceitful part in covenanting with
" God."

B. " Neither, Lord, am I afraid to ſtand the teſt
" of thy WORD; for, when I ſee what it requires of
" thoſe who are invited to enter into covenant with
" thee, and examine what has paſſed in my own
" ſoul, I cannot but acknowledge, that I am one of
" thoſe, with whom thou art willing to enter into co-
" venant; for, there I read, that thou inviteſt the
" poor, the mourners in Zion, the hungry and the
" thirſty, and thoſe who are ſenſible that ſtrength is
" not in themſelves, to preſerve the life of their
" ſouls."

C. " And, when I hold intercourſe with thy chil-
" dren, am told of their EXPERIENCES, ſee their ex-
" erciſes, and read their writings, although I have
" never ſeen their perſons, my heart can perfectly
" unite with them; what they experience, I experi-
" ence; there may, indeed, be a difference, with reſ-
" pect to circumſtances and manner; but with re-
" gard to eſſential points, I find that God has fulfil-
" led his word by Jeremiah; " *and I will give them*
" *one heart, and one way.*"

D. " But, that I may not, after all, deceive my-
" ſelf, I come with my heart as it is, and lay it before
" THINE OMNISCIENT EYE; *do thou ſearch and try*
" *me, ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead*
" *me in the way everlaſting*," Pſ. cxxxix.



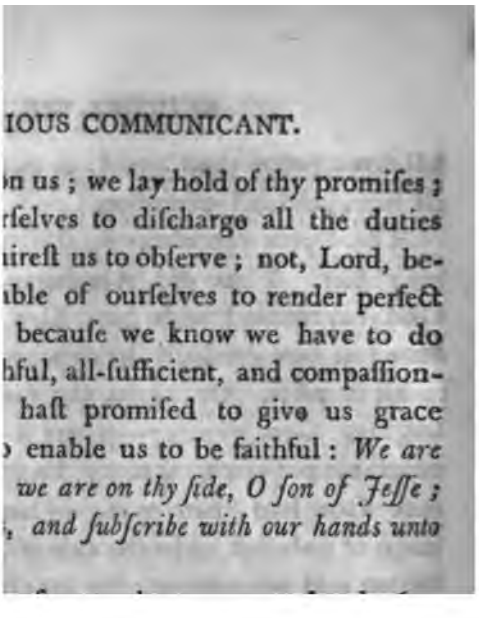
IOUS COMMUNICANT.

he ſoul thus deals with itſelf, and
to it, may it not be ſaid, in the act
be ſincere and upright?
conſent which the ſoul yields, in
God, is INTERNAL or SECRET;
ut God and the believer, on this
-in covenant tranſactions among
ties are in contract; it is particular-

ſtammering tongue; yet, when alone with his God, he would be found to excel in the moſt pathetic and energetic eloquence. But once more;

8. Covenanting with God muſt be conſidered as an *act which extends*, without exception, to every part of the covenant; for, if it be the covenant of God; if Jehovah alone, who makes the various requiſitions, and promiſes, that the covenant contains, no one may add to, nor take from it. Thoſe who enter into covenant with God, muſt ſuffer themſelves to be led in the way, and according to the will of God; they may not cavil at any part of the covenant, but wholly yield to the ſovereign pleaſure of God, and only depend upon him for grace to enable them faithfully to diſcharge covenant obligations.

There are many ſinners, who would be willing to come within the bonds of the covenant, if they were allowed to make ſuch additions and alterations as their depraved minds would ſuggeſt; but when it is propoſed to them to covenant with God on his own terms, their language then is, "*depart from us, we* "*deſire not the knowledge of thy ways;*" but thoſe on the other hand, who, with ſincerity and uprightneſs of heart, would enter into the ſolemn contract, expreſs themſelves in this manner; "we object not to "any thing which we find contained in the covenant; "we are well pleaſed with all its parts: the DUTIES "which we are obliged to perform, are as precious "and dear to us as the PROMISES; the God of the "covenant is infinitely wiſe, and beſt knows what "is needful for us; far be it from us, to preſcribe to "him who *knoweth our down-ſitting and up-riſing*, "and whoſe all-ſeeing eye pervades univerſal ſpace. "—Lord, we approve of all the demands which



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

n us ; we lay hold of thy promiſes ;
rſelves to diſcharge all the duties
iireſt us to obſerve ; not, Lord, be-
ible of ourſelves to render perfect
becauſe we know we have to do
hful, all-ſufficient, and compaſſion-
haſt promiſed to give us grace
enable us to be faithful : *We are*
we are on thy ſide, O ſon of Jeſſe ;
, and ſubſcribe with our hands unto

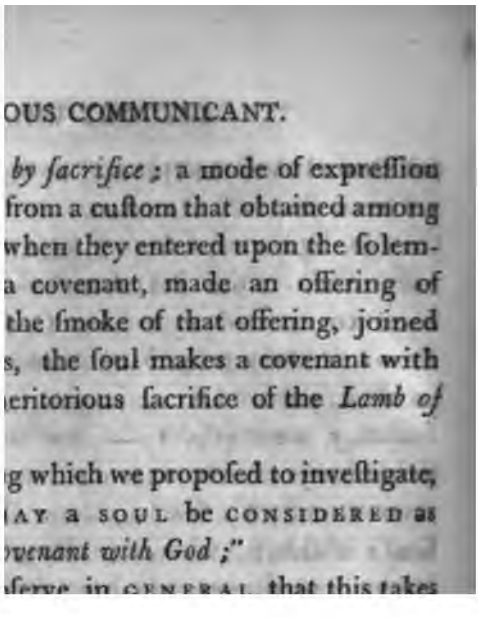
fall down before the Eternal, as one who is worthy of all love, and all adoration.

The Spirit repreſents it, alſo, as a *falling upon one's face.* Thus did Abraham, at the time that God covenanted with him, Gen. xvii. 17; and it ſhows us how cordially he approved of the covenant in all its parts. Or again, the ſame Spirit calls it a *laughing*, Gen. xvii. 17—where it is ſaid of the ſame venerable patriarch, that HE LAUGHED at the promiſe God had then made to him: it was not the laugh of unbelief, as in the caſe of Sarah, but of ſatisfaction and admiration: his laughter ſpoke this language, "Lord, doſt thou make ſo many promiſes to me; I embrace them, with gladneſs of heart." MOSES expreſſes this conſent, Deut. xxvi. 17, by an *avouching the Lord to be our God*, and that we *are his people*, which, in other words, is to enter into covenant with him.

It is called a *declaration* or a *ſubſcription* that we will *be the Lord's*, Iſai. xliv. 5; to evidence not only that it is now our full purpoſe of heart to be on the Lord's ſide, but that, during life, we will perſevere in the reſolution, through grace, and make an irrevocable covenant with Jehovah.

It is alſo denominated a *ſwearing;* it is ſaid of Judah, 2 Chron. xv. 12, 14, *That they entered into a covenant to ſeek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their ſoul, and* SWARE *unto the Lord with a loud voice.*—This evidences both the ſtability of the covenant, and the ſincerity of thoſe who enter within its bonds.—As God on his ſide SWEARS, ſo in like manner does the ſoul, "I have *ſworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*"

It is, laſtly, called, *covenanting itſelf*, Pſalm l. 5, *Gather my ſaints together unto me; thoſe that have made*



OUS COMMUNICANT.

by ſacrifice; a mode of expreſſion
from a cuſtom that obtained among
when they entered upon the ſolem-
a covenant, made an offering of
the ſmoke of that offering, joined
s, the ſoul makes a covenant with
eritorious ſacrifice of the *Lamb of*

g which we propoſed to inveſtigate,
AY A SOUL be CONSIDERED as
venant with God;"
ſerve in GENERAL that this takes

and cordial conſent to the covenant? Although it may not view this to be as a covenant tranſaction; although, by unbelief, it may be oppreſſed by doubts, yet the fact is, that it approves of the covenant in all its parts, is ſatisfied with the goſpel plan, and ſays AMEN to every propoſition which God makes in the *word of ſalvation.*

But, if we conſider the conſent, which the ſoul yields to the covenant, to be "a ſolemn and formal covenanting with God;" then, there are many of God's children, who have long been travelling the heavenly road; yes, who have died, and gone to glory; who, if aſked, "whether they have thus covenanted with God," would reply—"we have had our hearts often going out after God; we have panted after him, as *the hart panteth after the water-brooks*, we have felt our ſouls inflamed with love divine; but we are ſtrangers to this FORMAL act."—The reaſon of this may have been, becauſe they knew not in what covenanting with God eſſentially conſiſted, or becauſe, being diſpirited by unbelief, they dared not to engage in ſo ſolemn a work; thinking Jehovah to be too great and glorious a BEING, and themſelves too unworthy.—And yet all the while they actually were ſtanding in a covenant relation to God.

But then there are others again, who have been enabled, in the SOLEMN and FORMAL manner above mentioned, to bind themſelves to the Lord; theſe, ſeeing the God of the covenant, the Mediator of the covenant, and the covenant itſelf to be in every reſpect precious; and that an intereſt in it is of the laſt importance, have been powerfully drawn and ſweetly inclined to approve of the offers which God in the goſpel has made to them, and have come under obligations the moſt ſolemn, in the ſtrength of the

their lives to his ſervice; and we
e, that when a ſoul comes thus far,
elf in the enjoyment of an unſpeak-
r, when the firſt light, which once
liar radiance upon the ſoul, be-
larkneſs in ſome meaſure ſucceeds,
to reflect that the time was, when it
ed with God, may prove a fruitful
nd ſupport; at leaſt, by means of
red, the ſoul will be kept from con-
ly, that it is rejected of God; and

indeed ſay, when we leave our houſes, " Lord, we are willing alſo, to leave our old father's houſe, our ſins, Satan, and the world?"

When we go up to the houſe of God, and are about to ſeat ourſelves around the ſacred board, " Lord! ſwiftly, with the feet of faith, we would run " unto thee;" when we reach out the hand to receive the ſigns, " Lord, with deſires moſt ardent, we receive thee by the hand of faith;" when our eyes behold the emblems of the love of Jeſus, " Lord, thus the eye of faith is fixed upon thee, and upon thy perfect atonement;" when we eat the bread and drink the wine, " Lord, our ſouls deſire to hold communion with Chriſt, and to be united to him in the moſt intimate manner."—Now, beloved, if a ſoul be thus exerciſed, is it not evident, that the ſubject, on which we have been meditating, is calculated to animate and encourage us in our approaches to the table of the Lord?

Yes, it is a ſubject peculiarly neceſſary for thoſe, who indeed ſtand in a covenant relation to God, but who are in a BACKSLIDING ſtate; and thus are walking in darkneſs, and afraid that they have never entered into covenant with God at all;—for, what will be likely to contribute more to their reſtoration, than an immediate return to him whom they have forſaken? It is true, that God demands, when firſt his people come within the bonds of the covenant, that they be faithful; and they on their part do engage that they will be for him, and not for another; yet if afterwards they violate their engagement, and diſcover an unfaithful conduct, ſuch is his faithfulneſs to them, that he will never forſake them; but will, notwithſtanding, manifeſt both compaſſion and love towards them: —his benevolence, love, and compaſſion are diſplay-

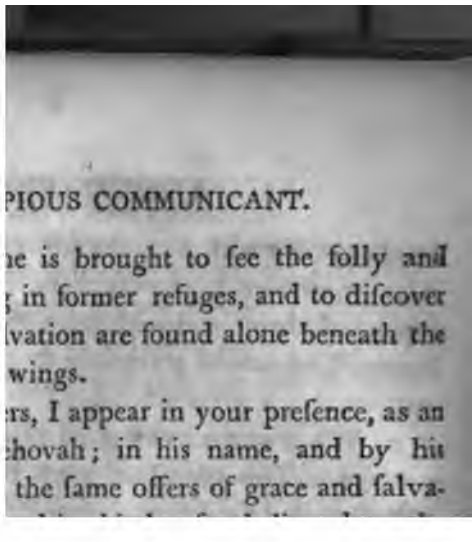
ıe addreſſes his covenant children,
' that a man will not ſoon receive
that has played the harlot; but *I*
though ye have played the harlot
rs.—Return; I will receive you
s of my love."—Now would it not
our part, inſtantly to comply with
poſals, than to reaſon thus; " we
rom God, and therefore we could
in covenant with him; we have no
eligion."

"but, alas, we have played the harlot, and ſtrayed "from thee; becauſe we are aſſured, from thine own "word, that thou art full of compaſſion, we now "come to thee, and will again renew former covenant "engagement with thee, and give ourſelves once "more to thee."

But we cannot cloſe this lecture without a brief application of the ſubject to the different claſſes which compoſe this aſſembly.

And FIRST we addreſs you, MISERABLE, IGNORANT, and CARELESS SINNERS, who are yet without the bonds of the covenant.

Unto you, we have a commiſſion from the God of heaven, that from beginning to end, contains a WARRANT to INVITE you to enter into covenant with God: and to induce you the more readily to comply with this propoſal, it is made in a variety of ways. Sometimes by INVITATIONS the moſt preſſing; Iſaiah xlv. 22, *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved!* ſometimes by entreaty; 2 Cor. iv. 20, *We pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled unto God:* ſometimes by way of ADVICE; Rev. iii. 17, *I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire:* ſometimes by way of COMPLAINT; Pſ. lxxxi. 13, *O, that my people had hearkened to me, and Iſrael had walked in my ways:* ſometimes in an UPBRAIDING manner; John v. 40, *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life:* ſometimes with the interpoſition of AN OATH; Eze. xxxiii. 11, *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked.*—Sometimes this goſpel offer is repreſented as a COMPULSION or urging of ſinners, by motives the moſt powerful, to accept of it; Luke xiv. 23, *Compel them to come in.* And what are theſe compulſory motives, but thoſe ſincere declarations, which God freely makes to the ſinner, in his



PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

ıe is brought to ſee the folly and
; in former refuges, and to diſcover
lvation are found alone beneath the
wings.
ers, I appear in your preſence, as an
ehovah; in his name, and by his
the ſame offers of grace and ſalva-

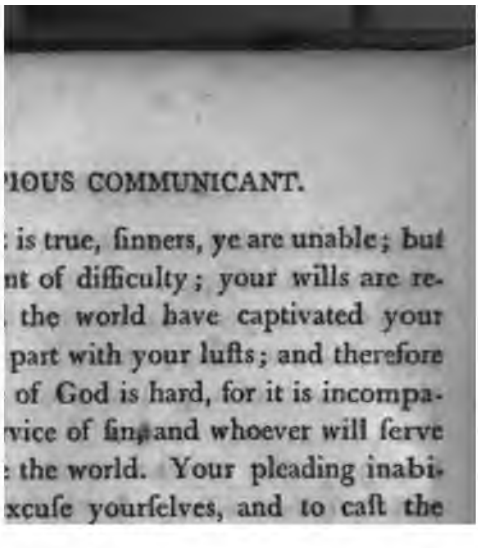
be chargeable with ALL the ſins of Adam's race, yet if he be enabled to confeſs them, mourn over them, repent of them, and with them to go to Jeſus as his ſurety, God would graciouſly forgive, and blot them out.

2. WE HAVE LIVED TOO LONG IN THE WAYS OF SIN. This objection muſt ceaſe, when it is recollected that God ſays, *I have ſtretched out my hands all the day*, not only in YOUTH, the MORNING; in MANHOOD, the NOON; but in OLD AGE, the EVENING of your lives. Rom. x. 21.

3. WE HAVE NOTHING WHICH CAN RENDER US ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.—This, certainly, can be no ſerious objection, if we reflect that God requires nothing more of us in his word, than an inclination, a willingneſs to receive every bleſſing from the hands of a covenant God. If ſinners, though red with guilt, and black with filth, look unto God in Chriſt, the Scriptures aſſure us, that he will receive and embrace them in the arms of his love.

Should ye, after all this, periſh, the blame will be attached to none but yourſelves. Your ruin will be effected, not merely on account of the covenant of works having been broken in Adam; but for not having been willing to come to God; for having diſregarded the offers of mercy, and treated his covenant with contempt. The devils ſinned only ONCE; but ye, times and ways WITHOUT NUMBER—ye have ſinned againſt the convictions of your own conſciences, againſt the compaſſions of the Eternal, and againſt his goſpel.—O! how dreadful, beyond expreſſion dreadful, is the thought, that after having enjoyed ſuch privileges, ye ſhould be loſt for ever.

Say not, We have been taught that WE CANNOT GIVE OURSELVES GRACE, AND ARE UNABLE TO



'IOUS COMMUNICANT.

: is true, ſinners, ye are unable; but
nt of difficulty; your wills are re-
the world have captivated your
part with your luſts; and therefore
of God is hard, for it is incompa-
vice of ſin, and whoever will ſerve
: the world. Your pleading inabi-
xcuſe yourſelves, and to caſt the

nant of grace, and even deſire to be intereſted in its unſpeakable bleſſings.

We exhort you—ſet not too high a value upon your firſt convictions, and rely not too much upon the emotions of a ſpiritual nature, which you may have felt, or may now feel; for, as we cannot immediately, at the commencement of the ſpiritual life, with preciſion diſtinguiſh whether thoſe convictions and emotions are the effects of real life, or whether they be ſparks which an awakened conſcience may have produced, unleſs they are ſucceeded by an actual ſurrender of ourſelves to God and his ſervice, ſo ye can never attain to reſt, until ye are brought to this point. Be not ſatisfied with being able to ſay, "We have been under convictions, and are ſo *ſtill*:" for theſe are not the ground on which a ſinner ought to reſt, even though they may have induced him to forſake his more atrocious crimes, and to become externally moral and ſerious.—By convictions, ye may *eſcape the pollutions of the world*; but if ye have nothing more, *ye may again fall away*, Heb. vi. 4, 8. O! convinced ſinners, let this text deeply impreſs your hearts, that ye may be prevailed upon to enter truly into covenant with God:—and although, at times, ye may experience ſome deſire OF SALVATION through Chriſt, yet think not this to be all that is neceſſary; for, though your deſires after SALVATION may be ſerious, yet they may not be thoſe which our Redeemer has declared ſhall be ſatisfied, Matt. v. Hence, in concluding favourably with reſpect to your ſtate and condition, merely from certain emotions and deſires after ſalvation, you ought carefully to examine, whether thoſe deſires are ſuch as are wrought in the heart by the ſpirit of grace.—— If they be really ſuch, you have not been ſatisfied

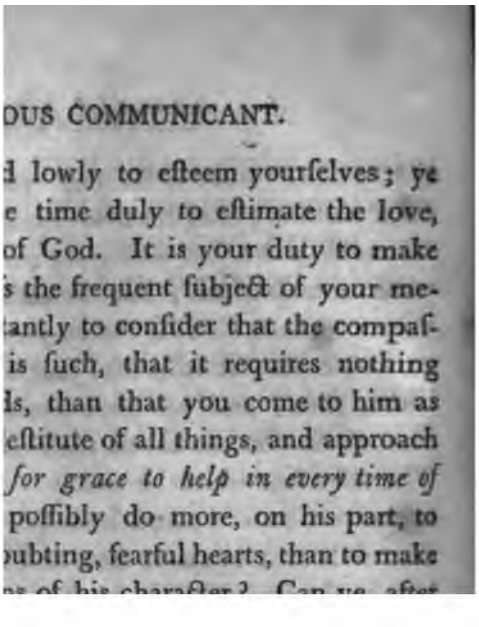
g, but have cordially ſurrendered
d in Chriſt, and can appeal with
, to bear witneſs to your ſincerity.
'e are ſatisfied with reſpect to your
atter, do not immediately conclude,
certain that ye have actually en-
nt with God. It may be ſo; but
it is poſſible that theſe exerciſes of
be ſuch as ariſe only from an en-
t; for, when a perſon obtains a ſight
ideous forms; of *God* and Jeſus in
of the covenant in all its fulneſs;

to enter within its bonds. In the mean time, proceed in the ways of religion: if the Lord hath begun in your hearts a good work, he will carry it on and perfect it, both to his glory, and your eternal ſalvation.

But, ye CHILDREN OF GOD, who are conſtantly in doubt whether ye have ever covenanted with God, unto you a word of encouragement and ſupport muſt be addreſſed.

WHEREFORE DO YE DOUBT? Do not your fears ariſe from ſome one or other of the following cauſes?

1. FROM NOT HAVING JUST AND PROPER VIEWS OF GOD? Perhaps your conceptions of duty have been very incorrect: poſſibly your meditations of God's greatneſs, majeſty, juſtice, holineſs, and glory, have been purſued to an extreme, and your views of his grace and love, of his mercy and compaſſion, have been too contracted. Thus to contemplate God, neceſſarily will produce fears and doubts, and lead you to expreſs yourſelves in the following language of unbelief: "Can ſuch poor, worthleſs, hell-"deſerving creatures; creatures whoſe *breath is in* "*their noſtrils*, and who are formed from the duſt, "dare to enter into covenant with ſuch an infinite "and glorious Being? For us to give the hand to "the Lord of heaven and earth, we conceive would "be the higheſt preſumption."—It is becauſe ye reaſon thus, that ye remain at ſuch a diſtance from him, and are afraid to commune with him. But, FEARFUL, DOUBTING SOULS, ſuffer us to remark, that whilſt it is highly proper that you form to yourſelves the higheſt conceptions of the great Eternal, and appear before him deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of his majeſty; whilſt it becomes you to be clothed



DUS COMMUNICANT.

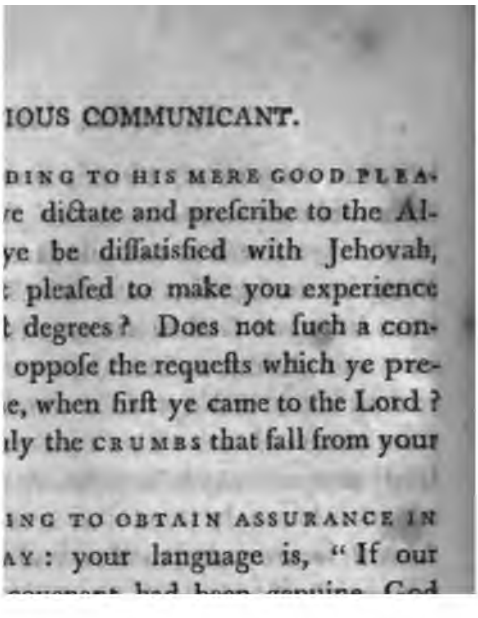
d lowly to eſteem yourſelves; ye
e time duly to eſtimate the love,
of God. It is your duty to make
s the frequent ſubject of your me-
antly to conſider that the compaſ-
is ſuch, that it requires nothing
ls, than that you come to him as
eſtitute of all things, and approach
for grace to help in every time of
poſſibly do more, on his part, to
oubting, fearful hearts, than to make

DOUBTING SOULS, let not even this prevent you from renewing your covenant engagements with God. We believe that it is with great reaſon ye complain of your unfaithfulneſs; but remember that God, even your covenant God, at the very time, alſo knew that ye would act this unfaithful part, and fall into a backſliding ſtate; and yet ſuch treatment he will bear from thoſe who are within the bonds of the covenant. The covenant which he makes with you is the covenant OF GRACE; and therefore he gives you freedom to return again to him, and ſeek for reconciliation in the blood of the Mediator.

But do ye object, "That if we enter anew into "ſuch SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS to God, we ſhall "again violate them, ſeeing we have to wreſtle with a "ſinful and deceitful heart, are expoſed to ſo many "temptations from external objects, and have in our-"ſelves no ſtrength, no ability to reſiſt our enemies." O beloved, Jehovah knows it too, that ye will again fall into ſin; but the point in queſtion is this, Is ſin your burden; is it your ſincere deſire to be freed from it? If God were to aſk you, "*What would ye that I ſhould* "*do unto you,*" would ye not reply, "Lord, we deſire "nothing more earneſtly, than that ſin be mortified "in us; that we had more ſtrength to oppoſe Satan "and the world, and that we might ſerve thee with "greater ſincerity than ever we have done."

3. Do ye once more object, and ſay, "We "cannot deny that we have cordially and willingly "devoted ourſelves to God, but ſtill we are afraid "that WE HAVE NOT BEEN SINCERE IN THIS "TRANSACTION; for God has never yet EVI-"DENCED it to us by the SPECIAL WITNESS OF "HIS SPIRIT." In anſwer to this, we obſerve,

a. That God is a SOVEREIGN, and, in diſpenſing



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

DING TO HIS MERE GOOD PLEA-
/e dictate and prescribe to the Al-
ye be dissatisfied with Jehovah,
: pleased to make you experience
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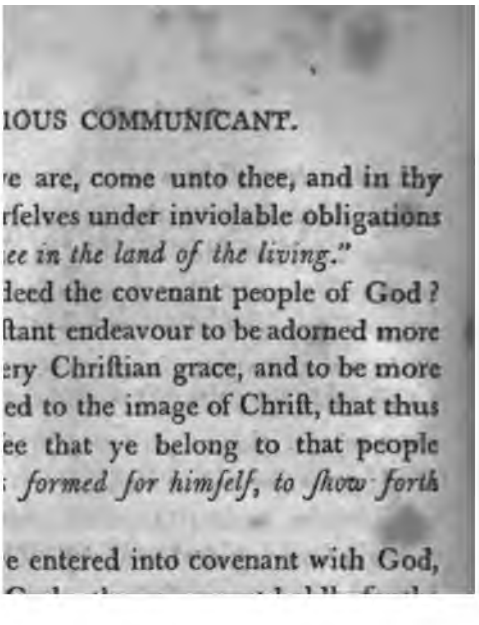
oppose the requests which ye pre-
e, when first ye came to the Lord?
ıly the CRUMBS that fall from your

ING TO OBTAIN ASSURANCE IN
AY: your language is, "If our

lecture. At preſent we barely remark, that it is duty to be ſubmiſſive to the divine dealings with your ſouls. Are ye called to walk in darkneſs? the God of the covenant, who is infinite in wiſdom, knows what is for your beſt advantage; he leads you in ways dark and gloomy, to keep you humble, and to teach you to live by faith, and to continue to make him your refuge. Leave then all your concerns with your God; preſcribe not to him the WAY or the MANNER in which he ought to conduct you; but rather ſay, "Lord, however dark and difficult the path may be, "in which thou leadeſt us, we lament not that we "have bidden an everlaſting adieu to ſin, to Satan, "to the world, and have choſen thee for our portion; "however it may fare with us in this life, we will, by "thy grace, reſt upon thy promiſes." This is living by faith, and thus to live, would make you aſhamed of living without repoſing an entire confidence in your Saviour God; of living without cordially ſubmitting to the providential and gracious diſpenſations of thy Redeemer.

But, PEOPLE OF GOD, who are MORE ASSURED, and whoſe grounds of encouragement are ſtrong, and walk in the light of the Lord, ſeek ye to become ſtill more eſtabliſhed; and, to this end, daily examine yourſelves by the marks of grace, which are recorded in the word of God, and often reflect upon your firſt exerciſes; when, hungering and thirſting after Chriſt and his righteouſneſs, ye importuned God to beſtow upon you his grace, and when the Spirit of the Lord, by his irreſiſtible power, overcame you, and your hearts in anguiſh cried, "Lord, although thou art exalted "*far above all principalities and powers*, and art in- "veſted with infinite majeſty and glory, yet, becauſe thou condeſcendeſt to regard worm Jacob, we, poor



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

ve are, come unto thee, and in thy
rſelves under inviolable obligations
ee in the land of the living."
deed the covenant people of God?
ſtant endeavour to be adorned more
ery Chriſtian grace, and to be more
ed to the image of Chriſt, that thus
ee that ye belong to that people
formed for himſelf, to ſhow forth

e entered into covenant with God,

THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT

ENCOURAGED,

AND DIRECTED IN WHAT MANNER HE MAY APPROACH

The Holy Supper of the Lord,

ACCEPTABLY TO GOD, AND PROFITABLY TO HIMSELF.

IN A SERIES OF LECTURES.

By the Rev. PETER IMMENS,

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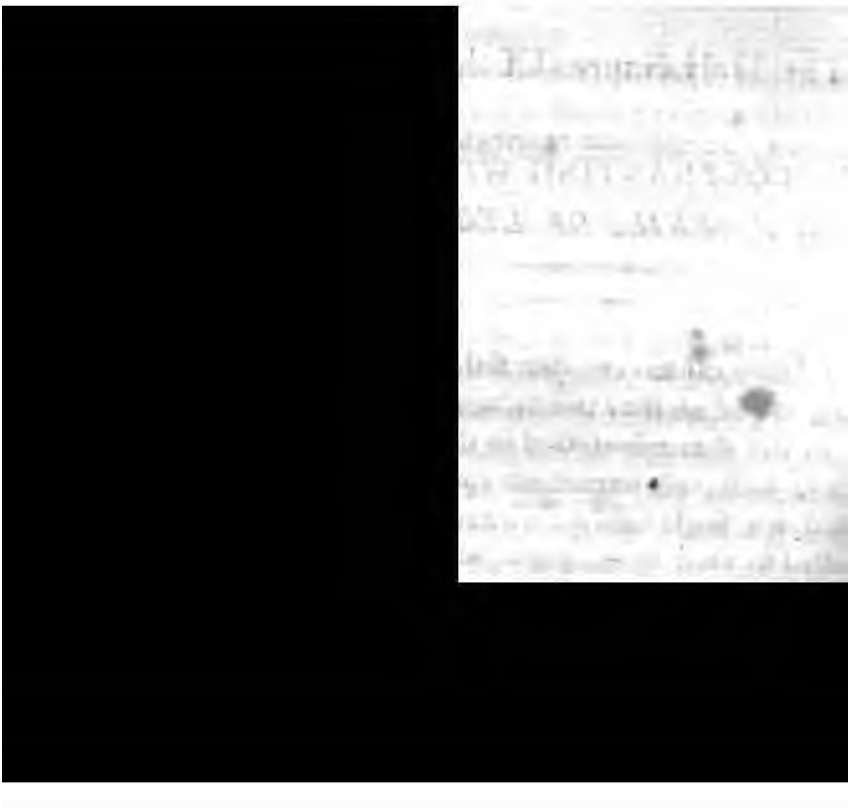


THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture IX.

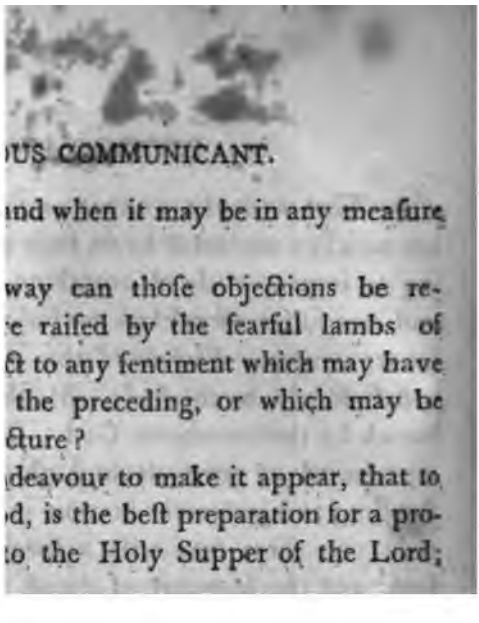
ON COVENANTING WITH GOD.

ON a late occaſion we addreſſed you on the intereſting ſubject of the SINNER'S giving his cordial aſſent to the demands of God in the covenant. A ſubject of ſuch vaſt importance could not be fully diſcuſſed in a ſingle lecture: we have therefore been compelled to omit ſeveral points which, in our general diviſion of the ſubject, were propoſed to be illuſtrated. To thoſe points we now ſolicit that attention which their magnitude demands.

I. How ought thoſe to conduct themſelves who are engaged in covenanting with God, ſo that they may beſt evince their ſincerity, and obtain for their ſouls, divine conſolation?

II. What SEASONS are the moſt proper for the ſolemn work of covenanting with God? Ought the ſoul only ONCE, or muſt it FREQUENTLY engage in it?—On what particular occaſions ſhould the covenant engagements of God's people be renewed?

III. What are the beſt MEANS of preſerving a Chriſtian's confidence of his intereſt in the covenant;



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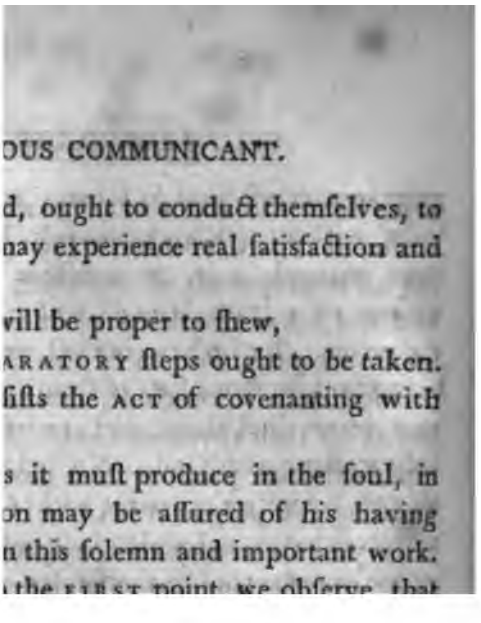
deavour to make it appear, that to
d, is the beſt preparation for a pro-
to the Holy Supper of the Lord;

2. That ALMOST CHRISTIANS, and TEMPORARY BELIEVERS muſt be on their guard againſt making an improper uſe of any thing we may advance; and not ſuffer themſelves to indulge a careleſs and ſecure temper. Perſons of this deſcription are apt, too ſuddenly, to conclude, that they have taken Jehovah for their covenant God. The covenant being repreſented as precious and glorious, their underſtanding and judgment become in a manner convinced; yes, there may ariſe a ſpecies of deſire in the ſoul, and the language of almoſt Chriſtians may be, who would not be in covenant with God? They may fancy that when they made their confeſſion before the church, or at ſome other important period of their lives, they entered within its bonds; but it is only fancy, they have never, in ſincerity, conſented with the heart to take the Lord for their God; they have never approved of the covenant in all its parts; they are ſtrangers to the illuminations of the Spirit, by which alone the ſoul is drawn to embrace the covenant, as propoſed by God in his word; and their knowledge of the truth is merely ſpeculative, for as yet they have never ſeen their real ſituation before God, nor beheld their character.

3. That the BLIND and CARELESS ought not to entertain LOW and MEAN CONCEPTIONS of the experimental truths, which will be exhibited in this lecture; for we ſhall ſpeak of things, *which the natural man underſtandeth not; and which are fooliſhneſs unto him;* of things which cannot be diſcovered in their true colours, but by the enlightening influences of the Holy Ghoſt.

Having made theſe obſervations, we proceed now to the ſubject under diſcuſſion, and ſhall attempt to ſhew how thoſe, whoſe hearts are ſeriouſly diſpoſed to



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gage in a tranſaction ſo ſolemn and of ſuch magnitude, without much previous deliberation, or, having engaged in it, to conclude immediately that we are of a truth brought within the bonds of the covenant. By ſuch a conduct we are in danger of being brought into a ſtate of ſecurity, and of becoming in a degree indifferent and careleſs, with reſpect to holy walking with God. No, beloved, we *muſt count the coſt* before we covenant with God; we muſt aſk ourſelves again and again, is it our ſincere deſire to be for ever devoted to the ſervice of the ETERNAL? in this way we are likely to be eſtabliſhed and confirmed in this, a point of the laſt importance, *that the work has been done in truth.*

2. But as perſons ought not to be too forward, ſo neither ſhould THEY DELAY TOO MUCH the important tranſaction of ſolemnly entering into covenant with God, as if by waiting or poſtponing the buſineſs, they would obtain thoſe frames of heart which are neceſſary in order to their performance of it, in an acceptable manner. This is a miſtake into which thoſe are frequently led, who juſt commence living the life of faith; it ſprings from a ſelf-righteous principle.—They who are governed by it, conceive that they have no liberty to approach unto God, until they find themſelves in ſuch a frame, and poſſeſs ſuch a degree of contrition or faith, as they have propoſed to themſelves to be neceſſary; as ſoon as they ſhall attain this point, then ſay they, "we are prepared to covenant with the Lord:" hence it reſults that they continue long without the bonds of the covenant, for they have not power to bring themſelves into ſuch frames; and therefore, beloved, when the Spirit may have convinced you of ſin and of righteouſneſs, give your hand to the Lord; the diſpoſi-

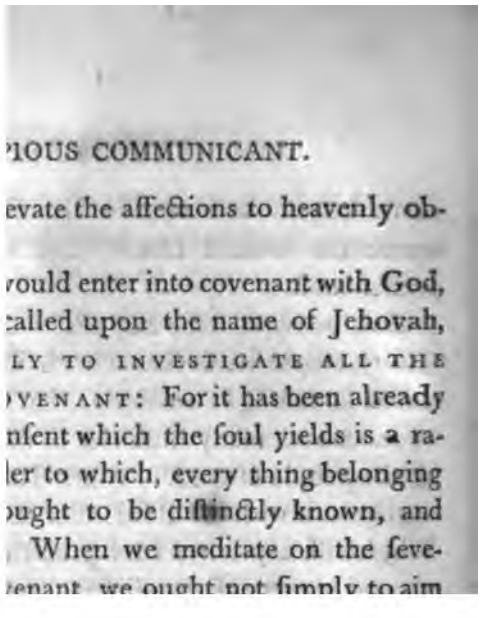
tions of mind which are neceſſary for covenanting acceptably to God, Jehovah himſelf muſt impart.

3. Thoſe who would enter into covenant with God, ought to be CALM, TRANQUIL and compoſed: diſtracting cares of the world muſt not be allowed to draw off their minds, nor ſhould unbelief be ſuffered to alarm or bring their ſouls to become the ſport of doubts and fears; on the contrary, it behoves them to act a rational part when they covenant with God, and have the heart compoſed. We would not ſuggeſt the idea, that perſons, who are brought into circumſtances peculiarly diſtreſſing, who are filled with the extreme of anguiſh, by reaſon of ſickneſs and the like, or who are in imminent danger, may not caſt themſelves upon the Lord, and in ſuch ſeaſons of diſtreſs, enter into covenant with God.—They may; and though, by reaſon of the preſſure of exiſting circumſtances, they may want a tranquil and compoſed mind; yet ſuch covenanting may have the ſeal of divine approbation affixed to it.

4. Thoſe who would enter into covenant with God, ought to ſeek to be prepared for engaging in ſo ſolemn a tranſaction, by retiring from the world, and by engaging in meditation and prayer alone; when God would enter into covenant with Abraham, *he brought him forth abroad*, Gen. xv. 5. When Iſaac would hold converſe with God, *he went into the field*, Gen. xxiv. 63. When God had made ſuch great covenant promiſes unto David, as thoſe recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 11, 17, it is ſaid, that after Nathan left him, "*he went in and ſat before the Lord*," and, yielding a cordial conſent to the covenant, ſaid, "*Lord what is thy ſervant*," verſe 20. In ſecret, or when alone with God, the believers, with the boldneſs of a child that knows that he is loved by his father, can make all his

wants known to him, and has freedom to tell him where the wound bleeds, and where his burden preſſes moſt.

But, perhaps, ſome may aſk, "Is it uſeful and neceſſary, when we covenant with God, to ſet apart a ſeaſon for faſting? we reply, that in the word of God we meet with many inſtances of its having been done by the people of God. When Iſrael would enter into covenant with the Lord, after their return from the Babyloniſh captivity, they proclaimed a day for faſting and prayer; Ezra viii. 21; and, whenever it can be done, it is certainly proper, as it evidences a zeal and engagedneſs on our part, as alſo a determination, through grace, to be wholly the Lord's. But, as we do not find the word of God enjoining it, as that which is abſolutely neceſſary, we would not declare that the ſoul cannot covenant with its God without previouſly ſetting apart a ſeaſon for faſting and prayer.—There are ſome whoſe ſituation in life is ſuch that it would be extremely difficult to obſerve ſuch days;—others are ſo circumſtanced, that they would meet with much oppoſition, if they were found devoting ſtated ſeaſons to it—whilſt others, again, having made but ſmall attainments in Chriſtian knowledge and experience, might not find themſelves qualified to keep ſuch a day as it ought to be kept:—Therefore, it muſt be left to the diſcretion of each Chriſtian, whether it would be beſt for him to appoint a ſet time for faſting and prayer before he begin the great work of covenanting with God:—At the ſame time, however, it muſt be remarked, that the ſoul, when it engages in ſolemnly taking the Lord for its God, cannot but wreſtle with him, in prayer, and expreſs its dependance upon him for light and ſtrength. Prayer is a mean the beſt calculated to wean the heart



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evate the affections to heavenly ob-

would enter into covenant with God,
called upon the name of Jehovah,
LY TO INVESTIGATE ALL THE
OVENANT: For it has been already
nſent which the ſoul yields is a ra-
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ought to be diſtinctly known, and
When we meditate on the feve-
enant we ought not ſimply to aim

all things which we need? Is it poſſible that the ſoul can refrain from adoring and admiring a God ſo holy and gracious? muſt it not glow with ardent affections towards him? It is not an uncommon caſe for the children of God to commence examining the ſeveral parts of the covenant, under the experience of much barrenneſs and deadneſs of ſoul, and to end the ſcrutiny not only much animated, but enabled cordially to conſent, and ſay AMEN to all its contents.

6. But, as thoſe who covenant with God have obſtacles frequently thrown into their way, they muſt be on their GUARD, leſt the wiles of their ſpiritual enemies keep them from cloſing with the Lord as their God.—For this purpoſe,

A. Let not your ſouls be deterred from covenanting with God, becauſe it is ſuggeſted, that HE IS A GOD OF INFINITE GLORY AND MAJESTY. There is, indeed, great reaſon why you ſhould be humbled into the very duſt in his preſence, and cry out, "Who "am I, that I ſhould be allowed to treat with ſuch a "glorious and holy being?" But, at the ſame time, it muſt be remembered, that Satan impreſſes the mind with a ſenſe of the majeſty of Deity, not to honour him, but to alarm and terrify you: therefore, when he aſſaults you in this way, reply to the tempter thus, "It is a truth, the Eternal is infinitely exalted above "all created intelligences, and ſeated on a throne of "majeſty; yet, as a covenant God, he manifeſts him-"ſelf as one who abounds with love, grace, and mer-"cy. *He has proclaimed* his name the Lord, *the Lord* "*God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant* "*in goodneſs, ſhewing mercy unto thouſands.* He has "told us, that as *a father* he *pitieth them that fear* "*him*, and, that like the tender mother, who cannot "*but have compaſſion on her ſucking child*, he cannot

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children of his love; that he will
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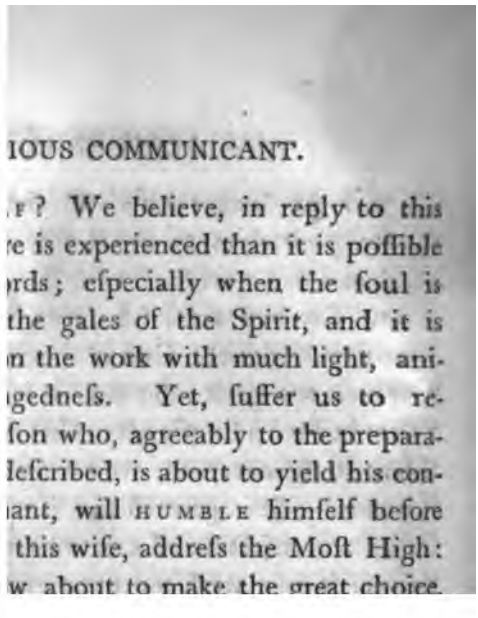
you are no longer his; and therefore, be bold to devote yourſelves to the Lord, as your God, and portion.

D. Say not that, "to HOLD ſuch an INTER-"COURSE with the God of heaven and earth, is a "WORK too great; ſay not, it is a thing impoſſible, "that by ſuch a ſimple act as that of yielding our con-"ſent to the covenant, we can be admitted within its "bonds." It is granted that if we conſider the matter as a tranſaction of creatures with the great Supreme, it is a work too great even for the moſt exalted ſeraph to engage in; but if we contemplate the character of God, it cannot be a work too great; for ſuch is his goodneſs, that it will induce him to diſplay ſuch condeſcending grace. And is GOD thus diſpoſed to deal with you, what ſhould withhold you from that intercourſe with him to which his word encourages you?

7. Thoſe who enter into covenant with God, muſt do it depending on the divine and gracious INFLUENCES of the Holy Spirit. It is not enough that the underſtanding be in ſome degree illuminated, and that the judgment be rationally convinced, but the heart muſt be enlivened, and rendered active and zealous for God; it is however the Holy Ghoſt alone, who can produce life in the ſoul, and an engagedneſs in the ſervice of Jehovah. If therefore you would approve yourſelves ſincere and earneſt in this work, and riſe ſuperior to the accuſations of your enemies; take the Spirit with you, covenanting with your God.

Theſe things, we conceive, merit the particular attention of ſuch as would covenant with God, and ſwear to be his for ever.

But, IN WHAT CONSISTS THE ACT OF COVE-



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ſon who, agreeably to the prepara-
leſcribed, is about to yield his con-
ɪant, will HUMBLE himſelf before
this wiſe, addreſs the Moſt High:
w about to make the great choice.

" unworthy creature, and worm of the duſt. I do " it alſo IN FAITH, with my eye directed to the " Lord Jeſus alone, and to his one ſacrifice made " upon the croſs; which is the only ground of my " confidence. Yes, Lord,—I do it, SENSIBLE of " my INABILITY; I am aware, that if I depended " on myſelf, or upon any ſtrength of my own, I " ſhould not continue faithful to thee one moment: " but I expect, from the promiſes of the covenant, " that all neceſſary grace will be imparted: and, " therefore, O Triune God, I take thee for the por- " tion of my ſoul,—thee, FATHER, for my Father,— " thee, BLESSED JESUS, for my Redeemer and my " Saviour, for my Prophet, Prieſt, and King, to be " taught, conducted, and governed by thee; and " *thee*, God the HOLY GHOST, for my Counſellor, " Guide, and Comforter. And all this I do with " full conſent of heart, and ſincerity of ſoul: for unto " me thou art an object ſo glorious and amiable, that " all my affections centre in thee alone." Language like this in ſome meaſure expreſſes the exerciſes of the ſoul in the act of covenanting with God. Such are its views, and ſo loſt is it in admiration, that words cannot fully deſcribe them. It is conſtrained to cry out with David, 2 Sam. vii. 20, *Is this the manner of man, O Lord God, and what can David ſay more?* For thou, O Lord God, knoweſt thy ſervant. Do any now enquire what poſture of body is moſt proper, when a perſon is engaged in covenanting with God? we would reply, on this point poſitive directions cannot be given. However, we remark that that poſition is moſt ſuitable, which beſt expreſſes our reverence and reſpect for God. On examining the ſacred Scriptures, we find, that the people of God, when in the act of

ɔ uſed different poſtures. When
with God, *they ſtood before the*
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ıes heard. Thus, Iſrael is ſaid to
voice, 2 Chron. xv. 14. This they

Now, has any perſon, in this or in a ſimilar manner, concluded a covenant tranſaction with God? certain effects are neceſſarily produced, by which he is enabled to ſatisfy himſelf that he hath really covenanted with God. For inſtance: after the ſolemn buſineſs is completed, does not the ſoul experience more light, and a ſtronger confidence; a joy unſpeakable, and an inward ſatisfaction in all the ways of God? Is it not excited to praiſe, admire, and adore God, for having condeſcended to covenant with ſuch a *worm* Jacob? Does not ſuch a view of God's condeſcenſion produce humility of heart, and make the ſoul appear ſo little in its own eyes, that with Abraham it muſt exclaim, Gen. xviii. 27, *Who am I, that I, who am but duſt and aſhes, have taken upon me to ſpeak unto the Lord?*

In a word, when the ſoul has been engaged in covenanting with God, will there not be deſires excited to have ſin mortified, to be more holy, and to live more to the glory of God. What inference muſt the ſoul now deduce from all theſe experiences, but that it hath covenanted with the Lord, not merely in form, but with ſincerity of heart, and that God himſelf hath ſet his ſeal of approbation to the ſolemn work, and engaged to be our God?

But it is ſometimes the caſe, that the ſoul is filled with fears; and wanting confidence, it dares not proceed to ſuch a length as to take Jehovah for its covenant God. It has, indeed, ardent deſires after him: it cordially acquieſces in his diſpenſations: it can ſay, "Lord, I would rather die at the feet of Je-"ſus, than return to the ſervice of ſin, Satan, or the "world."—And does not all this amount to an actual ſurrender of the ſoul to God? Though it cannot, at the time, view it as ſuch, yet, when it ſhall

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in which a ſoul ought to conduct

nant people of God; for the *gifts and calling* of God are without repentance. But ſtill, in order to our living comfortably, and being animated on the way, we muſt not ſimply once chooſe the Lord for our covenant God, but the ſolemn act muſt be repeated. We cannot too frequently renew our engagements to be the Lord's for ever.

It often occurs, that the Chriſtian doubts of his having ACTUALLY entered into covenant with God. But nothing can better remove his doubts, and aſſure him of his having done it in truth, than to go immediately to the Lord, and ſay, "Lord, I am ſtill "willing to take thee for my covenant God, and if I "have never before, I will now do it in the ſincerity "of my heart."

Again, There are ſeaſons when, overtaken by temptations, he FALLS into ſin, becomes unfaithful to his God, and conſequently loſes his wonted confidence in him. Shall he riſe again, and be reſtored to his former ſituation? let him directly go to the Lord, and again devote himſelf to his ſervice. In this way the Eternal is glorified, and the intentions of the enemy defeated.

But the conduct of God himſelf will be the beſt guide to us in this point. He did not content himſelf with once making a gracious covenant with the believing patriarchs, but often repeated it. Firſt, he covenanted with Adam after his fall, and then with Noah, both before and after the flood. He frequently made a covenant with Abraham, and afterwards renewed the ſame with Iſaac and Jacob, with David and other ſaints. But why did God ſo frequently covenant with his people, if not to teach them that he was ſincere in the declarations which he had made, and to remove from their minds every cauſe of un-

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Now, has God, who is unchangea-
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C. The people of God ought to renew their covenant with him on all *ſolemn* occaſions, ſuch as days ſet apart for faſting and prayer, and for commemorating the dying love of Chriſt in the ſacrament of the ſupper. At ſuch ſeaſons we are eſpecially called to engage in an examination of the ſtate of our hearts, and of our conduct before the Lord. Such an inveſtigation will lead us to diſcover that we have offended him, times and ways without number. Now, what can be more to our advantage and comfort, than to return unto God, with confeſſion of ſin and contrition of heart, and, in his ſtrength, again pledge ourſelves to be true to him. The Scriptures expreſsly mention that the ſaints obſerved days of faſting and prayer, on which they were to covenant with God.

D. The people of God are called to renew their covenant, when they enter upon ARDUOUS and IMPORTANT offices, or are called in providence to change their ſituation in life. At ſuch ſeaſons they ſtand in need of much grace, in order that they may continue faithful to their covenant engagements: and therefore, previous to entering upon ſuch undertakings, it behoves them ſolemnly to approach God, and ſay, " Lord, we undertake this work, not with " a view to break our covenant engagements with " thee, nor in any reſpect to weaken them. And " to evidence this, we humble ourſelves before thee, " and look to thee as our covenant God, for all " needful grace to enable us faithfully to diſcharge the " duties of our ſtation."

E. Chriſtians muſt renew their covenant when they FALL into any grievous ſins; then is the time to ſet apart a day for faſting and prayer. When David had committed thoſe groſs ſins, mentioned in the

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nt muſt be renewed when you are
aordinary difficulties, when afflic-

dinary expreſſions in the Canticles, "*thou haſt raviſhed my heart with one of thine eyes*, Songs, iv. 9: *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me*, Chap. vi. 5: *My deſire is towards thee.*" As love is ſaid to be the whetſtone which ſharpens love, ſo the Lord Jeſus promiſes, John xiv. 23, "*If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him:*" and again, Prov. viii. 17, "*I love them that love me.*" Are there ſo many great and precious promiſes to thoſe who love the Lord? what can tend more to preſerve our friendſhip and intimacy with God, than the exerciſe of love to him?—what is it that gives the higheſt perfection to conjugal happineſs? is it not mutual love? and what unites the ſoul in the cloſeſt bands to God, and creates a holy boldneſs in his preſence? it is love aſcending like incenſe towards heaven, and reciprocated by the God of love. But if we would expect that our love ſhould meet with a gracious return, we muſt be careful that it be an UNDIVIDED love, excluding ſelf-love and the love of the creature; for God is a jealous God, and will have the whole heart.

B. To preſerve the confidence of faith, it is further neceſſary, that the people of God become intimately acquainted with him; "*acquaint thyſelf with God, and be at peace,*" Job. xxii. 21. We muſt meditate much upon the divine perfections, eſpecially thoſe which are diſplayed in the covenant of grace; we muſt acquaint ourſelves with him, by keeping up a conſtant intercourſe with him, by the exerciſe of faith; by earneſt prayer; by freely conſulting with him, and by ſpeaking of him to others. In a word, we acquaint ourſelves with God, by converſing with him in ſecret, and by praiſing him in *pſalms, hymns,*

. By ſuch an intercourſe with him,
: character given to Noah in the
' That *he walked with God.*" And
:ct that, according to his gracious
ıl his *ſecret* to us: that when we
ıpon him, he *will ſuſtain us*, and
; *the deſires of our hearts.*

maintain a well-grounded confi-
ɔur covenant relation to God, we
PECT in our conduct, as it reſpects
ourſelves, as well as God; for,

neſs ſhall not depart from us, nor ſhall the covenant of his peace be removed.—When a child has committed a fault, if he continues obſtinate, and diſobedient, he meets the diſpleaſure of his father; but if he ſubmits to his authority, with ſuitable contrition, the compaſſionate father forgives him, and receives him to his favour; juſt ſo our heavenly Father deals with his children. When they tranſgreſs, and continue inſenſible of the offence, they may expect his frowns, or his chaſtizing rod; but if they return to him with humble confeſſion of their ſins, his language towards them is, "*As a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord "pitieth them that fear him,*" Pſ. ciii. 13.

E. That the people of God may preſerve the confidence of faith, nothing is more uſeful than a FREQUENT, a DAILY RENEWAL of the covenant. Of this we have already ſpoken at ſome length; but do any inquire whether the covenant muſt in the ſame ſolemn manner be renewed? we anſwer that it is not neceſſary that it be always done with the ſame formality; yet we ought every day, in ſecret, to preſent ourſelves before God, profeſſing ourſelves to be his, declaring our reſolution to cleave to him, and ſupplicating him, to enable us to be faithful to all our covenant engagements.

F. Would we preſerve our confidence towards God? we muſt be CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY. The conſideration of the auguſt and awful majeſty of God, ſhould excite in us the moſt profound reverence, and a ſenſe of our meanneſs ſhould lead us to appear before him with the deepeſt abaſement and lowlineſs of mind. Whilſt nothing is more offenſive than pride, nothing is more pleaſing to him than humility. Therefore, it is that *he reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*, James iv. 6.

ch is neceſſary in order to preſerve
he people of God, it follows that,
ant be unchangeable in its nature,
: may in a meaſure be loſt, and the
the believer be interrupted, by
iding his face, and withholding the
iis love. Is it aſked why are God's
of the light of their Father's coun-
we may aſſign a variety of reaſons,
n God, and partly from believers

c. To diſplay his amazing POWER and GOODNESS. Does the Eternal not only preſerve them in the enjoyment of the ſpiritual life, but reſtore them again to their former ſtrength, and cauſe them afterwards to triumph over Satan, and thus revive *the hearts of the contrite ones.* He diſplays his unbounded benevolence and love, and exhibits power which infinitely tranſcends the energies of creatures the moſt exalted in the ſcale of beings.

B. The REASONS of God's dealing thus with his people are not found only on his ſide, but alſo on the part of BELIEVERS; and theſe reſpect either the time PAST or the FUTURE.

With reſpect to the time PAST, we obſerve that God withholds the light of his countenance;

a. When the children of his love have committed great and aggravated ſins. The holineſs of his nature, in ſuch caſe, requires that they ſhould be chaſtized; be made to feel the rod; ceaſe to enjoy, at leaſt for a ſeaſon, their wonted intercourſe with him; and thus learn that God cannot have fellowſhip with thoſe who work iniquity. David experienced this, though a man after God's own heart; he no ſooner fell into ſin, than he loſt the *joys of his ſalvation,* Pſ. li. 14.

b. When abuſing the goodneſs of God, they treat his DIVINE MAJESTY with little reverence and reſpect, or when through ſloth, and inattention, they do not cheriſh thoſe bleſſed experiences which they have had of his grace and love. The ſpouſe laid herſelf on the bed of ſloth, and ſuffered the bridegroom to ſtand knocking without. However, to her great ſurpriſe, ſhe ſoon found that *her* beloved had withdrawn himſelf. Songs v. 2, 7.

c. When they CONFIDE in an arm of fleſh, or

own arm to bring ſalvation, ſay-
Matt. xxvi. 33, *Though all men*
becauſe of thee, yet will I never be

ITUAL PRIDE, on account of any
ns, ariſe in his people. Then God
his divine diſpleaſure, and by
vours, evidences that *he reſiſteth the*

are not ſufficiently WEANED from
world. It is found frequently to

Chriſtians often become formal and languid in the diſcharge of this duty. To animate them, and to make them wreſtle with him, he hides his ſmiling face from them. This was the effect which afflictions produced upon HEMAN, Pſ. lxxxviii. 1, *O Lord God of my ſalvation, I have cried day and night before thee.* When the bridegroom, who had long been ſtanding and knocking, had at length retired, the ſpouſe, made ſenſible of her need of his preſence, awakes from her ſlumbers, ſeeks him in the ſtreets, and in the more retired parts of the city, Songs vi. 6, 7.

c. That he may TEACH them true wiſdom; for, by ſuch diſpenſations, God's children are induced to inveſtigate with care and attention his dealings with them.

d. That when God ſhall afterwards viſit them again with ſalvation, they may be more careful to preſerve his favour. Such was the effect it produced on the mind of the ſpouſe; when *ſhe found her beloved, ſhe held him faſt, and would not let him go.*

3. But when the intimate fellowſhip which once exiſted between God and his people, appears for the preſent interrupted, and the light of his countenance is concealed from their view, what is to be done, in order that their former intimacy and confidence may be RESTORED?

A. They muſt endeavour to find out the CAUSE which has produced the evil, ſaying with Job, chap. x. 2, *Shew me wherefore thou contendeſt with me.*

B. The cauſe being diſcovered, it becomes them to be ASHAMED of their ſins, to confeſs them, and with humility to return to the Lord their God, ſaying with David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, *I have ſinned greatly, I have done very fooliſhly.*

C. They ought to be much in PRAYER, that God

:h them as ſtrangers; but, as chil-
nt, *uphold them by his free Spirit.*—
they ſhould plead, Pſ. cxix. 176,
like a loſt ſheep, ſeek thy ſervant;
thy commandments.
ıt, under ſuch circumſtances, to
h ſerioufneſs, their former covenant
gain declare before him, that they
. Until this is done, they cannot
a return of the joys and delights
ienced when the Lord viſited their

experienced even ſlight conviction of ſin, but will, when he is told of this covenant, expreſs his approbation of it, and ſay, "Who would not yield an "aſſent to ſuch gracious propoſals?—As for me, I "will cordially approve of, and ſet my ſeal to them." He may even go ſo far as to perſuade himſelf that he has already done it, becauſe of the ſpeculative view he may have taken of it; but though he may have gone thus far, yet he was not ſincere,—the work has not been done in truth; for, as yet, his heart is not diveſted of its love of ſin,—he has not yet come to a real knowledge of himſelf,—he has never been made to abandon his ſelf-righteous principles. All this is manifeſt from his walk and converſation, which is not heavenly, but earthly, and too much aſſimilated to that of natural men: conſequently his boaſted aſſent was only that of the underſtanding and fancy. A perſon of this deſcription may indeed converſe on the eſſential doctrines of religion; but never feel the influence of them upon his heart.

It is however very different with reſpect to thoſe who have CORDIALLY conſented to the covenant and its ſeveral parts. If, like ALMOST Chriſtians, they have ſpeculatively ſurveyed the covenant on all ſides, they have likewiſe the knowledge which is communicated by the Holy Ghoſt, which is experimental and ſanctifying. They have been ſweetly drawn to yield their conſent, by the force which the doctrines exhibited in the covenant have had upon their ſouls. Yes they muſt, they will exclaim, "We "well know how to diſtinguiſh between that period "of our lives, when we were ſpiritually dead, and "inactive for God, and when we became awakened "into a holy engagedneſs for his ſervice: we well "remember the time when, attending on the public

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ıties of religion, we felt no ſoſt
and anxiouſly waited for the con-
performances, and felt no other-
with reſpect to the covenant, its
niſes, than men in general. But
know that there have been ſeaſons
ıen our hearts were ſo exerciſed,
rarmed, with love to the God of
at we were made perfectly willing
ive unto him, and to ſay with
s, Away, *ſin*, *world*, Satan; we

would find abundant ground of complaining, and of diſtruſting your intereſt in the covenant. But ſuffer me to aſk you, whether the remains of ſin in you, your untender carriage before the world, on ſome occaſions, and your deficiencies in duty, are not a cauſe of diſtreſs to your ſouls? Can you avoid making the declaration before God, that nothing would afford you greater ſatisfaction, and meet more with the ardent deſires of your ſouls, than to be enabled to live more agreeably to the will of God,—to have ſin daily more and more mortified, and to make more ſuitable returns for that grace which he has imparted to you?——Such deſires evidence, with certainty, your ſincerity, and ſhew that you have received *the truth in the love of it.*——But,

2. It may be aſked, Whence is it that, though at the time we FIRST made a covenant with the Lord, or when we AFTERWARDS renewed it, we were much in the exerciſe of faith,—had our hearts deeply affected,—and experienced a high degree of light and life; yet we are NOW overwhelmed with ſuch darkneſs, that we dare not believe that we ever did ſincerely and cordially come within the bonds of the covenant?

But, CHILDREN of God? for your encouragement we remark, that, in order to judge of your ſincerity, all your exerciſes muſt be beheld by the light with which the Holy Spirit is pleaſed to irradiate the ſoul. Now there are times when this light is withheld from you: it naturally reſults that midnight gloom and darkneſs, conſequent upon ſin and a careleſs walk towards the God of the covenant, overſpread the ſoul; and this may proceed to ſuch lengths, that, inſtead of contemplating its former experiences, and deriving ſupport from them, it cannot meditate upon them; but doubts and fears ariſe.

inquire, When darkneſs obtains to
the ſoul, whether we may bring
s in review, as a ground on which
his depends entirely on the effects
om ſo doing.—If to reſt on former
s us careleſs and unconcerned, with
lk and converſation, and cauſes us
ent, and ready to ſay, We are ſen-
paſſed between God and our ſouls;
voted ourſelves to his ſervice; and
nay have been unfaithful, yet he is

B. Former experiences are uſeful to ENCOURAGE and bear up your ſouls, when the Lord conceals from you the light of his countenance. When you look back, and duly conſider how lively your exerciſes once were; with what fervour you approached the throne of grace; how unreſervedly you ſurrendered yourſelves to the Lord Jeſus; and how ſolemnly you engaged to be followers of him, as the great captain of your ſalvation; the natural concluſion that muſt be drawn from all theſe experiences is, that they ſprung not from nature, but from grace: than which reflexion, nothing can more animate the ſouls of the diſtreſſed and doubting children of the covenant.

C. Paſt experiences are eſpecially to be conſidered as uſeful, when they ſerve to AWAKEN you to WALK more tenderly in the preſence of God, even when he may be hiding his face from you; inſomuch that you can ſay, Lord, although now we are ſenſible that thou art withholding from us thoſe joys and thoſe divine conſolations which once we taſted; yet ſtill ſtrong are our deſires after holineſs,—great are our obligations to thee; and we are anxious to fulfil them all.

3. But ſtill there are others who ſay, We would not dare aſſert that, ſo far as reſpects us, we have not given ourſelves unto God, and ſaid AMEN to every part of the covenant; but ſtill we fear that the work hath not been done in truth; for God, on his part, has never aſſured us of it, by giving us *to taſte and ſee that he is good*, as he hath done to others of his redeemed ones. We conceive that, if we had in reality entered into the covenant, Jehovah would, at one time or other, have embraced us in love.

A. That we may be inſtrumental in affording you

: would obſerve, That you ought
becauſe you have never enjoyed
nces of a work of grace upon your
himſelf: for has not the Lord al-
pon you great bleſſings? can it be
ıer name than that of AMAZING
h light hath beamed in your ſouls;
ver that you have cordially given

apt to form too great ideas of the
h Jehovah meets with his people,

could not refrain from crying, "*Thou art fairer than* "*the ſons of men; grace is poured on thy lips;*" or could ſhed tears of love: have not theſe *tears* a taſte, a ſweetneſs, which you never before experienced; not even when the world ſmiled upon you, and when you drank deeply of the cup of creaturely comforts.

Yes, were you to be engaged in wreſtling with God, and did Jehovah but afford you the ſmalleſt drop out of the fountain of divine comforts, which he opens to his people; were he to reach out to you the ſceptre of his grace; and though, with a trembling hand, you ſhould touch it, and your ſouls be ſtrengthened and animated, would you not then alſo taſte, that is, experience a meeting of God with you? and, if you have never taſted more than this, nor ever ſhall in this life, fear not: your ſtate is good. We are told in the Scriptures, that we are not ſaved becauſe we are aſſured of grace, but becauſe we have GRACE wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Thus we have ſeen what appertains to the act of covenanting with God, as alſo the difficulties which ariſe in the minds of his people, with reſpect to that ſolemn work.

On all hands, it muſt be agreed that, in order to be well PREPARED for the holy ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, it is of the laſt importance that we cordially accept of God for our God, by the ſolemn act of entering into covenant with him; for what can be more ſuitable to our characters as members of his church, than to approach unto the table, giving our hearts away to him?—and what is better calculated to awaken the ſouls of his children unto renewed zeal, than to engage in tranſactions of this ſerious nature? Beſides, the ſubject of covenanting with God, as a ſubject of meditation, is uſeful to natural

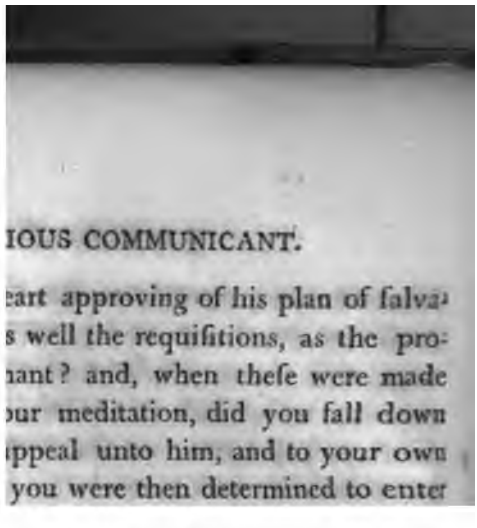
men, ſerving as a mean to convince them that, as long as they have no inclination to devote themſelves to the Lord, they cannot acceptably enter within his ſanctuary, in order to *eat of his bread, and drink of the wine which he hath mingled*; for that perſon who is not intereſted in the covenant itſelf, may not take its ſeals in his polluted hands.

But it is time to draw this lecture to a cloſe, by an applicatory addreſs to the different characters which conſtitute this aſſembly.

And, with reſpect to you who are here IGNORANT of the covenant, as to its letter,—and whoſe lives evidence a total INDIFFERENCE to its intereſting contents, ſhame and confuſion ought to cover your faces. The part you are acting is fooliſh and abſurd in the extreme. Would you not conſider a poor man chargeable with the higheſt degree of folly, who, if an eſtate were left him by will, were to neglect inveſtigating the contents of that teſtament, or ſhould be unconcerned about obtaining poſſeſſion of the inheritance? But, ſinners, your conduct is infinitely more abſurd: the God of heaven has made a glorious teſtament, and offers to preſent you with *an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away*; but you have never paid the leaſt attention to it; not even ſo much as to inquire whether your names are mentioned in it; whether its offers of mercy are made to you, or in what manner its invaluable bleſſings may be obtained. Unhappy beſotted men, who, with minds perfectly unconcerned, paſs through life without having God for your portion, and deſtitute of an intereſt in the covenant! What! is it poſſible that the repeated invitations of God in his word ſhall make no impreſſions upon you, and be nothing more than *ſeed which falls by the way ſide?*

But ALL are not chargeable with ſuch groſs ignorance: there are ſome whoſe knowledge of divine truths is conſiderably extenſive, and who therefore imagine that they have entered within the bonds of the covenant. To convince ſuch that they are perfect ſtrangers to the covenant, is a work truly arduous.—But, ſinners, let it be deeply impreſſed on your minds, that no truths are more clearly recorded in the word, than theſe; that all, by nature, are far from God, as their covenant God; that all come into the world crimſoned with ſin, and blackened with filth; that as ſuch polluted creatures they muſt be viewed, whilſt they are in the world, and that as ſuch too they muſt die, unleſs they experience a real change of heart. Without an intereſt in the covenant, we cannot poſſibly be ſaved. O, ye WORLDLING, carnal PROFESSORS, whoever ye be, lay theſe things ſeriouſly to heart! God will not be trifled with: he has promulgated his covenant; he offers it for your acceptance; in terms the moſt friendly he *invites* you to come within its bonds. Will you dare longer to ſlight his calls, and refuſe to come unto him? Shall the Eternal propoſe his own Son, in his all-fulneſs, for your acceptance,—and will you dare to ſay, *We deſire not the knowledge of thy ways?* ———Unexampled folly!

But, ſays the TEMPORARY believer, I do not refuſe to attend to the offers of mercy contained within the covenant: all its parts have been the ſubject of my meditation: I am convinced that it is ALL MY SALVATION, no where elſe is the way of life pointed out; and therefore I aſſent to it: for who would act a part ſo abſurd, as not to wiſh to be ſaved?——But we entreat you to pauſe, whilſt we aſk you a few queſtions of great moment. You ſay that you aſſent to the covenant; but have you ever, in the preſence



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eart approving of his plan of falva-
s well the requifitions, as the pro-
nant? and, when theſe were made
our meditation, did you fall down
ppeal unto him, and to your own
you were then determined to enter

take encouragement from this circumſtance; for to perſevere when the enemy exerts all his malicious rage, will afterwards ſerve to convince you of the ſincerity with which you acted in covenanting with God, and that you view the enemies of Jehovah to be in hoſtility with yourſelves.

SINNERS, if, notwithſtanding ſo many faithful warnings and admonitions as have been given you, you ſtill continue to act a deceitful part with God, ſuch will be the dreadful nature of the ruin that awaits you, ſuch your deplorable condition, when you ſhall appear at the bar of God, that, were an angel to attempt to delineate it, he would fail in the deſcription. You may be bold now to approach the Lord's table; you may now trifle with God and his word; but then you will diſcover, when it is too late, that God was ſerious when he threatened to pour out the vials of his wrath, on the workers of iniquity. O, that you believed this, and were made to lay it to heart in ſuch a manner, that now, whilſt the day of grace remains, you would duly conſider the *things that belong to your peace.*

But, CHILDREN OF GOD, and eſpecially you whoſe FAITH is WEAK, and who have your hearts DISQUIETED within you,—let not the word of terror juſt uttered in the leaſt alarm YOUR fears. A world lying in ſin muſt have their awful doom made known to them; but the dreadful picture we preſent to them can in no wiſe affect YOU. We have endeavoured already to remove many of the difficulties with which your hearts are oppreſſed, and now again ſpeak peace and comfort to your ſouls, that you may be animated on the way, and encouraged to *go up through the wilderneſs, leaning on your redeemer God.* But were we incapable of deſcribing the

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ı of the finally impenitent ſinner?
ı to paint the wrath of God which
: him? in like manner language
attempt a deſcription of your
of Jehovah's divine and ineffable
ıercy towards you. We can only
ı the ardency of his love towards
cret ſighs, your tears, your holy
are peculiarly pleaſing to him,
ng which delights him more. Are
by your ſins, you have ſtrayed

too great for a God to grant: the more unworthy you may be, the greater will be the diſplay of the riches of his grace, and the greater the cauſe to admire and to adore throughout eternity.

But do you ſtill object and ſay, True; but we have SUCH SINFUL HEARTS that we fear we ſhall again prove ourſelves unfaithful.——It is a good ſign when you are jealous of your hearts, and afraid leſt you break the engagements you may have entered into with God: but at the ſame time remember that God does not require of you to do any thing in your own ſtrength. He well knows that, if left to yourſelves, you would be unfaithful in every reſpect. Conſider further that ye are within the bonds of a covenant in which every thing is promiſed, not only preventing grace, but grace to enable you to perſevere to the end, in ſerving God with faithfulneſs and zeal. Plead then the promiſes of God, and ſay, Lord, on this we wholly depend, *that thy faithfulneſs faileth not*, and that thou wilt impart unto us as much light, life and ſtrength, *out of the fulneſs which there is in Jeſus*, as we ſhall need.——

But you who are ASSURED of your ſalvation, and behold with clearneſs your intereſt in the covenant, thank the Lord for having made your hearts willing to embrace ſuch a covenant as this, when naturally they were oppoſed to all its contents. Though this is free grace, yet you, as his covenant people, ought to make ſuitable returns to him, and evidence that your hearts overflow with gratitude, by *living righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly, in this preſent evil world*, and by acquieſcing in all the dealings of the Lord with you. You promiſed, when you gave yourſelves to him, that you were willing to be ſaved only in the way which he has deviſed. Cavil not at the Lord's

you, even though he lead you in
lifficult. Keep near to your God;
ıtly with him as your father and
ue to all the promiſes which you
m. Jehovah, your redeemer and
hful to all *the words which have*
outh.—He will eſtabliſh you more
ork of grace which he hath begun
mplete, and having *guided you by*
time, *he will afterwards receive you*

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Lecture X.

ON THE GREAT MEDIATOR OF THE COVENANT.

ing both to convince the impenitent, and to adminiſter encouragement to thoſe whoſe hearts are dejected and filled with doubts and fears.

What reſpects the FIRST point of diſcuſſion, viz. THAT IN THE GREAT MEDIATOR OF THE COVENANT THERE DWELLS A FULNESS AND ALL-SUFFICIENCY FOR SINNERS: As it is taken for granted, that thoſe truths which are annually taught us in public from the Heidelbergh Catechiſm, and which reſpect the neceſſary QUALIFICATIONS of the Mediator, are well underſtood, we proceed, without any preliminary obſervations, to exhibit precious Chriſt in his all-ſufficiency.—There dwelleth in him,

1. A complete fulneſs as GOD: He is, in all perfections and attributes, the equal of God the Father, and God the Holy Ghoſt. But eſpecially,

2. He is all-ſufficient as the great Mediator of the covenant: for, in conſequence of his having, from all eternity, taken upon him to complete the great work of ſalvation; and becauſe, in time, he hath actually accompliſhed it by his active and paſſive obedience; the Father hath inveſted him with all that fulneſs which was neceſſary for the ſinner's eternal happineſs, to the end that all his elect and redeemed ones might, out of that *fulneſs, receive grace for grace*, John i. 16. Is it aſked, Whence does it appear that the glorious Jeſus poſſeſſes a fulneſs for his people? We anſwer,

A. The NAMES which are given him, ſet forth in a moſt perſpicuous point of light, the all-ſufficiency of the Mediator. Is he called JESUS? What does it import, but that he is the Deliverer and Saviour of his people; who, reſcuing them from all evil, puts them in poſſeſſion of all bleſſedneſs, both in the

world that now is, and in that which is to come. Is he denominated CHRIST? It implies that he is the ANOINTED one, who is ſet apart and qualified for executing the three great offices of PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING:—offices which are neceſſary for him to hold, if happineſs eternal and infinite ſhall be the portion of his people. Beſides theſe proper names, Jeſus, Chriſt, he is alſo ſtyled, The LORD *our Righteouſneſs*, Jer. xxiii. 6. *Wonderful, Counſellor*, the *mighty God*, the *Everlaſting Father*, the *Prince of Peace*, Iſai. ix. 6.

B. The METAPHORS which Scripture employs to repreſent him, diſplay his mediatorial fulneſs. He is not only denominated an ANGEL, as he is the MESSENGER of the Father, but an angel by way of eminence, one infinitely ſuperior to all the angelic hoſt. If he be an angel, the name *of Jehovah is in him*, and he is Jehovah himſelf, Exod. xxiii. 21;—the *angel of his preſence*, Iſai. lxiii. 9;—the Head, and Lord of angels, whom they ALL muſt worſhip and adore, Heb. i. 6.—He is exhibited in the word under the emblems of *the Sun*, Pſalm lxxxiv. 12;—the *Sun* of Righteouſneſs, Mal. iv. 2;—the *Star out of* Jacob, Numb. xxiv. 17;—the *bright and morning Star*, Rev. xxii. 16;—the *day-ſpring from on high*, Luke i. 78: for, *He ſhall be as the light of the morning when the ſun riſeth; even a morning without clouds*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. And wherefore is it that ſuch metaphors are employed, but to teach us, that what the natural ſun is to the inhabitants of the world, Jeſus is to his church? He enlightens, warms, refreſhes, and makes it fruitful.

C. To manifeſt the fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of the Mediator, he is deſcribed as a MAN, yes, as *one fairer than the children of men*, into whoſe lips *grace*

is poured, Pſalm xlv. 2. The ſpouſe in the Canticles, after having given a very particular deſcription of his *head, hair, neck, breaſt*, and *feet*, exclaims, *He is the chiefeſt of ten thouſand, and altogether lovely*, Songs v. 16. And Iſaiah, with his uſual elegance of expreſſion, depicts him to be a man *in whom the Spirit of the Lord is—The ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, the ſpirit of counſel and might, the ſpirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord*, Iſai. xi. 2.

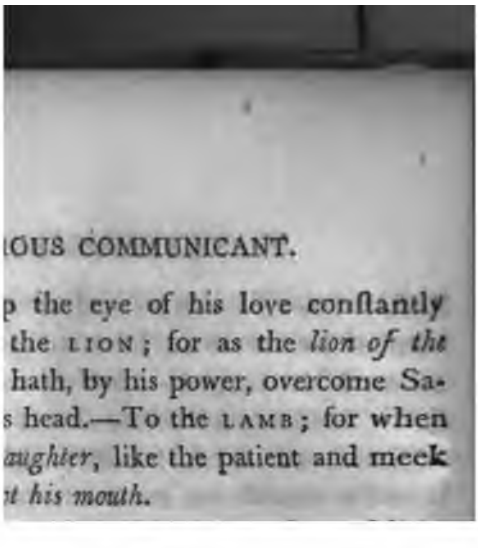
D. The Lord Jeſus is the great ANTITYPE of all thoſe celebrated worthies, who had flouriſhed in the world previous to his being manifeſted in the fleſh. Is he not ſtyled the ſecond ADAM, who is the head of the whole family of the elect? Is he not like NOAH, that TRUE COMFORTER, who brings ſalvation and comforts his people, *with reſpect to the toil and labour of our hands*, as the name Noah imports, Gen. v. 29. He is the real ISAAC, who is the ſource from whence holy *laughter* and joy ſprings to his people. He is another MOSES, yes, a prophet greater than Moſes, who hath revealed the whole counſel of God: the real DAVID and SOLOMON, whoſe *wiſdom*, *fear* of God, vaſt riches, and triumphant victories over his enemies, are celebrated as unparallelled by any who have preceded or ſhall ſucceed him. But why is he repreſented as the great antitype of all theſe men, if not to teach us, that he hath done, is doing, and will do more for the advancement of his people's felicity, than any of thoſe have done, who have appeared on the ſtage of the world before him?

E. He was SHADOWED forth under the Old Teſtament by many things, all of which combine to teach us, that all fulneſs dwells in him. The REDEEMERS, or GOELS, who were to exert them-

ſelves in favour of their deſtitute kindred, to repurchaſe the inheritances of thoſe, who by reaſon of poverty had mortgaged them; and to pay the ranſom for them, if ſold into ſlavery;—were ſtriking emblems of that *true Goel*, that great Redeemer Jeſus Chriſt, who was to deliver his people from the *power of Satan*, free them from the dominion of ſin, and reſtore them to the image of God which they had loſt. The HIGH-PRIEST, under the Old [illegible] ment, arrayed in his magnificent attire, en[illegible]to the ſacred place, and by offerings making atonement for the ſins of the people, was [illegible]uſtrious type of Jeſus, *the High-Prieſt over the [illegible] of God, who by his one offering hath for ever perfected them that are ſanctified*, and who, after he was *made perfect* by ſufferings, ſat down at the right hand of God. Heb. x. 13.

F. The great Mediator of the covenant is exhibited in the word under the emblem of a SHEPHERD, the *great Chief*, and *only* Shepherd, *who feeds his flock with knowledge and underſtanding, carries the lambs in his boſom, and gently leads thoſe that are with young*, Iſai. xl. 11,—who, like Jacob, will lead them on *ſoftly, according as they are able to endure*, Gen. xxxiii. 14. He is the true PHYSICIAN who relieves his people from all their ſpiritual maladies by the application of his precious blood.

G. Chriſt, as Mediator, is likened to the moſt GENEROUS and NOBLE amongſt birds and animals; —to the generous and towering eagle, who *ſtirreth up her neſt*, fluttereth *over her young, ſpreadeth abroad her wings, and taketh and bareth them on her wings*. For the Redeemer is repreſented as promiſing that his people ſhall *mount up on the wings of an eagle*, to ſecure them in all dangers, to provide for them in

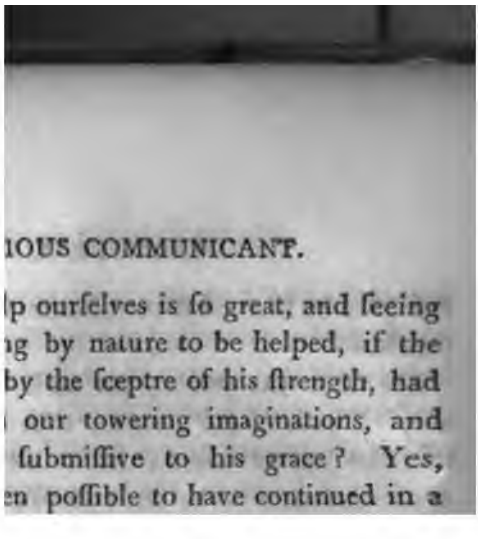


IOUS COMMUNICANT.

p the eye of his love conſtantly
the LION; for as the *lion of the*
hath, by his power, overcome Sa-
s head.—To the LAMB; for when
aughter, like the patient and meek
it his mouth.

Mal. iv. 2.—To BREAD and the MANNA which deſcended from heaven, John vi. 33.—To RAIN and DEW, Pſalm lxxii. 6. And why is he compared to theſe, but to convince us, that if water be neceſſary to ſatisfy our thirſt, fire to enlighten and warm us, bread to nouriſh us, manna to preſerve life, rain to make the earth fruitful, and dew to keep alive the herbs and plants, parched by the ſultry heat of a ſummer's ſun,—infinitely more neceſſary is Jeſus, in all theſe reſpects, to his people.

L. As the all-ſufficient Mediator, there are aſcribed to him THREE great and glorious OFFICES: for, how would it have been poſſible for us ever to have formed juſt and adequate conceptions of the way of ſalvation and of the covenant of God, unleſs he, as the great PROPHET and *teacher ſent from* God, had taught us the ſame? We were *blind*, yes, darkneſs itſelf: no light ſhone in the underſtanding: *the things of the Spirit of God* were eſteemed *fooliſhneſs*. But Jeſus, who hath received the *tongue of the learned*, has clearly unfolded to us the whole counſel of God. He did it previous to his manifeſtation in the fleſh, and he does it ſtill, by his word and ſpirit. Again, was it poſſible for us, guilty and polluted creatures, to approach unto God, and enter into covenant with him, if he, as the great HIGH-PRIEST, had not opened the way by his blood, and brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs? Certainly not: for, if he had not entered into the holieſt with his blood;—and if he did not ſtill live to intercede, the way of life would be now ſhut, and we could never go with boldneſs *to the throne of grace*, Heb. x. 20. In a word, How would it ever have been poſſible for us to have embraced the covenant, and complied with its terms when revealed, ſeeing



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

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our towering imaginations, and
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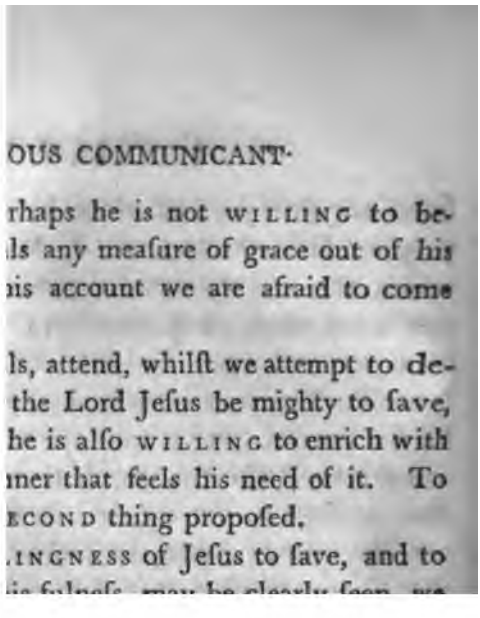
beſt pleaſes him, and contributes moſt to their happineſs.—

He hath the *power;* for he is God, and as ſuch may diſpoſe of his people, who are his property, without any to controul him. Is he the Mediator of the covenant?—he has a perfect *right* to deal with them as he ſees fit; for in the eternal council of peace the Father promiſed him, that when he ſhall *have made his ſoul an offering of ſin, he ſhould ſee his ſeed,* Iſai. liii. 10. Now, it being conſidered, that this would be done, God's faithfulneſs made it neceſſary for him to fulfil the promiſe; and therefore he ſaid, *Aſk of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion,* Pſ. ii. 8. And is this ſeed given to him?—it is neceſſary that he ſhould enrich it by imparting of his fulneſs, and by beſtowing upon it all needful bleſſings. And for this reaſon, ſays Chriſt, *the Father hath given all things into his hands,* John iii. 35. Is he exalted and ſeated as a king on his throne?—he not only enjoys completely himſelf all the bleſſings promiſed to him; but his people alſo muſt neceſſarily have communications of grace made to them here, and receive too a crown of glory hereafter.

Surely ſuch a view of the all-ſufficiency of Chriſt cannot but be a mean to animate and encourage the fearful children of God to fly unto Jeſus with all their wants, burdens, and complaints, to obtain from him a rich ſupply, ſupport, and relief. Say not, "We have no doubt but the deſcription which has "been given of the Saviour's fulneſs is accurately "given: but our diſtreſs ariſes not from a belief "that there is a want of ability and fulneſs in Chriſt "to ſave, to uphold, and comfort us. It is this that



OUS COMMUNICANT.

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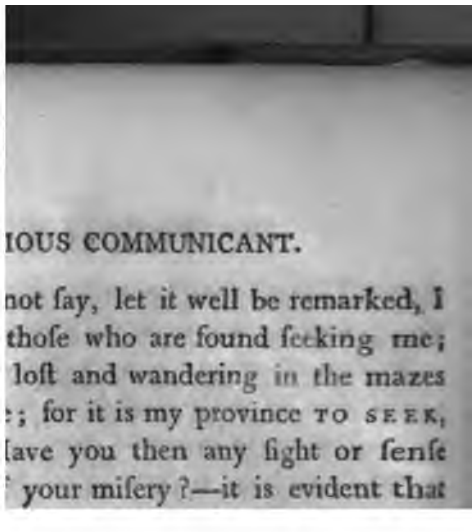
.INGNESS of Jeſus to ſave, and to

ſituation, than he hath done by the mouth of his prophet Hoſea? chap. xi. 8, *Mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together;* and by Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 11, *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* The tenderneſs and concern which Jeſus felt for ſinners, appears from his weeping over them, and crying, Luke xix. 42, *If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!* Again, he declares, that *he will gather ſinners together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, Matt. xxiii. 37. And again, Matt. xi. 28, he ſays, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.* O friendly and endearing invitations! Will you not yet believe, that Jeſus is willing to ſave? Yes, methinks we hear you ſay, we would readily believe it, were it not that ſome difficulties have ariſen, which operate as a bar to the exerciſe of a confidence in Chriſt's willingneſs. But

B. The difficulties which may have preſented themſelves, Chriſt himſelf has removed by this one promiſe: *All that the Father giveth me ſhall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wiſe caſt out*, John vi. 39. This promiſe reaches every caſe, and makes every obſtacle to vaniſh. If Chriſt had ſtated a hundred, a thouſand different caſes of conſcience,—ſouls in diſtreſs might have ſtill made objections that thoſe caſes were not exactly in point. But here no objection can be raiſed. *Him*, ſays Chriſt, be he who he may, that cometh to me, I will not caſt out. If any ſhould object and ſay, I am a great ſinner, I have too long deſpiſed the offers of grace, and ſtrayed from God,—remember, Jeſus ſays, *I am come to ſeek and to ſave that which*



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

not ſay, let it well be remarked, I
thoſe who are found ſeeking me;
loſt and wandering in the mazes
:; for it is my province TO SEEK,
lave you then any ſight or ſenſe
your miſery?—it is evident that

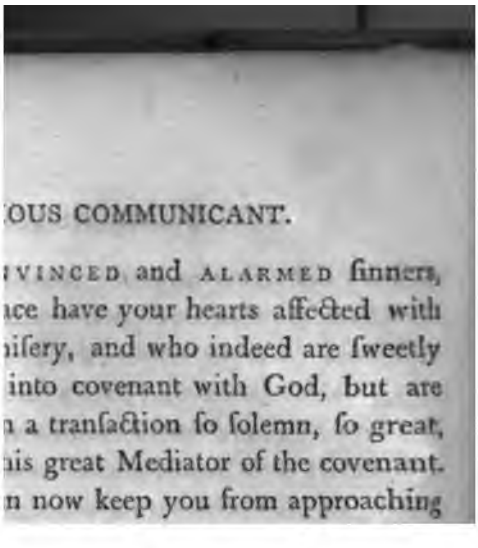
nant. It is true that Matthew records, chap. xiii. 58, that Jeſus *did not many mighty works in Nazareth*: —But to what was it to be attributed? Certainly not to a want of compaſſion in Jeſus for the inhabitants of his own country; but, as the evangeliſt expreſsly mentions, *to their unbelief:* for all who came to him, even there, were helped. Did he not act the part of a tender and faithful phyſician to the poſſeſſed of the devil, to thoſe who were afflicted with the leproſy, to the deaf, and the blind? What better or more concluſive evidence can we have of Chriſt's willingneſs to ſave the chief of ſinners, and deliver them from that miſery into which ſin hath brought them, upon their leaving all, and cleaving to him as the only *hope of Iſrael*, and Saviour of ſinners of the Gentiles?

D. The Lord Jeſus, to diſcover to the guilty ſons of men, that he is as WILLING as he is ABLE to ſave them, hath cauſed to be recorded in his word a variety of INSTANCES of his actually having reſcued from eternal deſtruction, ſinners whoſe tranſgreſſions were of a nature aggravated in the higheſt degree. Can we form to ourſelves any idea of there ever having been a greater ſinner than ADAM, the parent of human kind? He not only ſinned under circumſtances peculiarly calculated to keep him in the way of duty; but he ſinned, knowing at the ſame time, that as the head of his poſterity, he would, by his tranſgreſſion, bring miſery and wretchedneſs on the generations which were to ſpring from his loins. But were not grace and ſalvation beſtowed upon Adam? He had no ſooner *fallen* by *his iniquity*, than the way of life was revealed to him, and actually promiſed in theſe words of the ETERNAL: The ſeed of the woman *ſhall bruiſe* the ſerpent's *head*, Gen. iii. 15.

Shall we preſent you with the character of MANASSEH? Was he not for wickedneſs unequalled by all the kings of Iſrael that preceded or ſucceeded him? He not only ſinned himſelf, but he likewiſe *made Iſrael to ſin.* His iniquities were of ſo heinous a nature in the ſight of God, that on account of them the Lord would not be prevailed upon to have pity on Jeruſalem. Hear how Jehovah expreſſes himſelf, Jer. xv. 1, 5, 6: *Though Moſes and Samuel ſtood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people. Caſt them out of my ſight, and let them go forth: for who ſhall have pity on thee, O Jeruſalem? or who ſhall bemoan thee? or who ſhall go aſide to aſk how thou doeſt? Thou haſt forſaken me, therefore will I ſtretch out my hand againſt thee and deſtroy thee: I am weary with repenting.* And ſtill, beloved, to this vile Manaſſeh, God imparted his grace: for it is written, *When he was in affliction he beſought the Lord his God, and humbled himſelf greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his ſupplication,* 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. If our attention be turned from the inſtances which the Old Teſtament produces, to thoſe which are found in the New, we will be loſt in wonder at the contemplation of divine and redeeming love ſet forth in the converſion of the thief on the croſs. He was a thief, perhaps a murderer, and ſuffered the pains of crucifixion for crimes moſt atrocious—And yet this miſcreant, whom the laws of his country had adjudged unfit to live, found mercy: "Jeſus ſaid unto him, Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, to-day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe," Luke xxiii. 43. But why did Jeſus ſhew him favour? On the one hand, it was, that he might exhibit at this time the efficacy of his blood to ſave the greateſt ſinner; and,

on the other, that no perſon ſhould deſpair of finding grace, but believe, that whilſt the lamp of life continues to burn, the vileſt ſinner may return—may ſeek for grace, and look unto him for ſalvation. Was not Saul of Tarſus, who was afterwards denominated Paul, a ſinner above thouſands of others? He was a perſecutor of the brethren, a blaſphemer of Chriſt, one that conſented to the death of Stephen: and yet this wretch obtained mercy. Hear his own words, 1 Tim. i. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16: *I thank Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, who hath enabled me; for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the miniſtry, who was before a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, becauſe I did it in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus. This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief.* Yes, ſo free is the grace of Chriſt, that the very JEWS who had polluted their hands with the ſhedding of the innocent blood of the Prince of life, and *who had crucified the Lord of glory*, were made the monuments of mercy. For when the apoſtle Peter, on the day of Pentecoſt, charged them with theſe dreadful crimes, many of them *were pricked in their hearts*, and cried, *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?* Conſiderably more inſtances of this kind might be educed from the Scriptures: but a ſufficient number has been mentioned to ſhow that the greateſt ſinner may hope for grace in Chriſt.

See thus, beloved,—a Jeſus in whom all fulneſs dwells—a Jeſus who is all-ſufficient—a Jeſus who CAN, and alſo WILL freely grant ſalvation to all who come to him, and by him go to the Father.



OUS COMMUNICANT.

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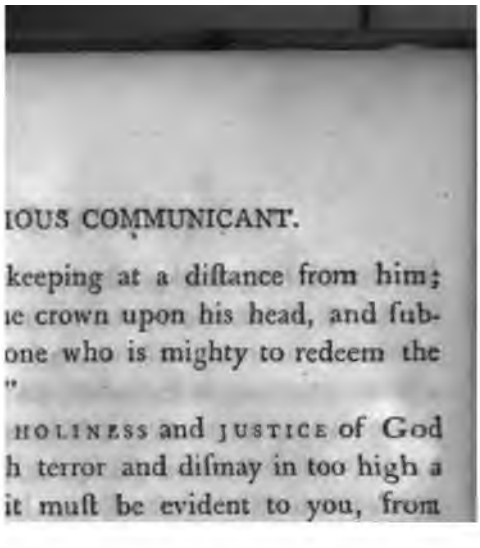
deſpair always reign—They are ſuggeſtions of the adverſary of your ſouls, who, when any are led over to Chriſt, in an EVANGELICAL, calm, and gentle way, ſeldom fails to ſuggeſt to ſuch, "that they have not had as great views of ſin as were neceſſary, nor have been enough diſtreſſed, broken and contrite in heart, on account of their having departed from the living God, and violated his holy law." This ſame adverſary appears in quite a different form, when God, in order to alarm the ſinner's conſcience, exhibits himſelf in all the terrors of his majeſty, and preſents to view the holineſs of his nature, and makes himſelf known to be a conſuming fire to the workers of iniquity. Then he is buſy to excite alarm; then, in order to keep Jeſus out of ſight as long as he poſſibly can, he is bold, contrary to the plaineſt declarations of the word, to diſcourage, and to induce a belief, that the ſins of ſuch perſons are too great to be forgiven, and that it is the extreme of preſumption even to think of approaching unto God, of ſoliciting pardon at his hands, or of fondly cheriſhing the hope that he will remove out of his ſight tranſgreſſions which are of ſuch a ſcarlet colour, and of ſuch a crimſon dye. O ſinners, whoſe ſouls are diſquieted within you, who are terrified at the ſight of the malignity and magnitude of your guilt,—ceaſe to fear: behold, there is a great Mediator—He hath made atonement for all ſins; the efficacy of his blood is infinite. Let your ſouls, then, take refuge beneath the ſhadow of his wings. He will not reject you becauſe you come with hearts oppreſſed by fears, and with eyes melted into tears, or becauſe you approach him with a trembling hand. His ſceptre of mercy is extended to you:—touch it;—and let ſentiments like theſe obtain: "We will not any longer reflect diſhonour



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

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HOLINESS and JUSTICE of God
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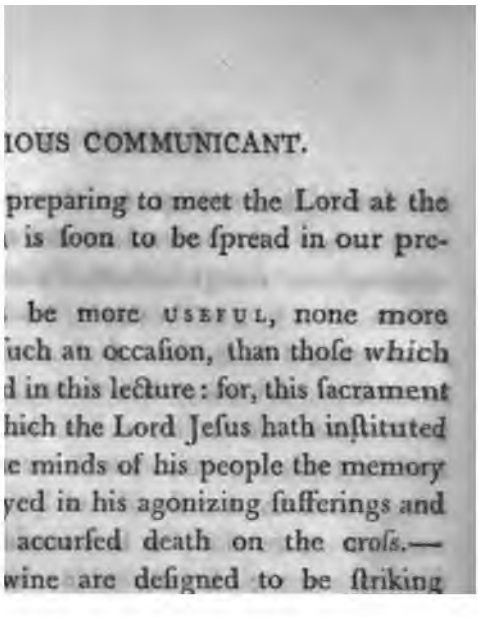
his church by promiſes, ſhadows and types; and, *in the fulneſs of time*, he ſent him *into the world made of a woman, in all things like unto his brethren, ſin only excepted.* He being in the world, the Father, that divine juſtice might be ſatisfied, *laid upon him the iniquity of us all;* and demanded that Jeſus, as the ſurety of the guilty, ſhould ſuffer, bleed, die: but at the ſame time made it evident to all, that he was well pleaſed in him :—for, by a voice from heaven, he declared, "*This is my beloved ſon, in whom I am well pleaſed,*" Matt 3. 17. i. e. his perſon is the object of my delight, and his righteouſneſs is, in every reſpect, ſatisfactory to my righteouſneſs.—Of this we cannot but be convinced, when we conſider that God raiſed him, and exalted him to a ſeat at his right hand. Now, afflicted and fearful ſouls, are you ſenſible of your being ſinners? Is it revealed to you in the goſpel, that that God whom you have offended by your ſins, hath, from a principle of free and ſovereign love, grace and compaſſion, appointed a Mediator to reconcile ſinners to himſelf; offers this perfect Saviour to all who feel compunction and anguiſh on account of ſin; and calls from heaven, ſaying, Behold my ſon, the mighty Redeemer; I have found a ranſom; with his obedience I am fully ſatisfied. O, do you approve of him too; take hold of him; embrace him by faith, and you ſhall be reconciled to me.

Surely, if diſtreſſed ſouls were duly to contemplate theſe things, nothing could keep them from God; every obſtacle would be removed out of the way, which at preſent deters them from going to him with boldneſs to ſeek for grace.

But it is time to apply the ſubject more particularly to thoſe compoſing this auditory, who have convened to-day in this ſacred temple, profeſſedly



IOUS COMMUNICANT.

preparing to meet the Lord at the
is ſoon to be ſpread in our pre-

be more USEFUL, none more
uch an occaſion, than thoſe which
d in this lecture: for, this ſacrament
hich the Lord Jeſus hath inſtituted
e minds of his people the memory
yed in his agonizing ſufferings and
accurſed death on the croſs.—
wine are deſigned to be ſtriking

will not be deterred by any thing we can addreſs to them; they ſay, God is merciful and gracious; and contemplate thoſe perfections of God not as illuſtrated in Chriſt. But, UNCONVERTED ſinners, know that it is an eternal truth, that, if God were to diſplay his grace in any other way but through the Saviour, both his holineſs and juſtice would be ſullied. You ſay, God is gracious;—but you have never as yet taken refuge beneath the ſhadow of Jeſus' wings, in and through whom alone he beſtows his grace. You are bold to come to his holy table; but you have never experienced any ſincere deſires after the Lord Jeſus, nor have your hearts been exerciſed by faith and love. O that you did but ſee how guilty you are before God; that you have violated his holy law, which is thundering its dreadful curſes againſt you. The guilt which you have contracted you cannot remove, even though it were in your power to be attempting it through the endleſs ages of eternity. For, conſider what it coſt the Son of God himſelf to effect it as the ſurety of ſinners. He muſt leave the throne of his glory; he muſt become man; die the accurſed death of the croſs, before one ſinner could be admitted within the bonds of the covenant of grace. How then can you conceive it poſſible that you can be admitted into the preſence of God, and enjoy the light of his countenance without an intereſt in the divine Redeemer?

I am aware that there are MANY of you who, having received a religious education, are convinced that, OUT OF CHRIST THERE IS NO SALVATION. Such are apt to imagine and flatter themſelves that they have a ſaving intereſt in him; but I pray you, tell me on what principle you imagine that this is the caſe? Jeſus is indeed a Saviour; but he ſaves not

be feared that the leaſt, by far the
ı's ſinful race look to him as their
ɛ intereſted in Chriſt, you muſt be
ıper and diſpoſition of your minds,
longer be the object of your love.
ıd to purſue ſinful courſes, are in-
:he religion of Chriſt; and to live
for, ſooner or later, you will find
ſsly miſtaken the road which leads
eſs and God.—If you have never
lly taught your miſery, and felt

of his anointing, and are acquainted with the religion of the heart.—You may preſume, as you have done often before now, to ſit as the people of God ſit, and eat of the bread, and drink of the wine; but have you not reaſon to fear that, when Chriſt, the Maſter of the feaſt, ſhall come to ſurvey the gueſts who are ſeated around his ſacred board, that he will addreſs you, ſaying, *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?* An awful, a dreadful ſilence, expreſſive of your diſmay, will then be obſerved.—Sinners, take heed to yourſelves; preſume no more to ruſh into the preſence of God with your unhallowed heart. God will not be mocked.

There are others again whoſe INSENSIBILITY is not ſo great; who have indeed been affected under the means of grace, and have felt ſome deſires in their hearts after Chriſt, when he has been deſcribed in the character of a Saviour, as one abſolutely neceſſary, moſt precious, and altogether lovely; but who at the ſame time view thoſe deſires which have been thus raiſed, and thoſe religious impreſſions which have been ſometimes made upon their minds, as the foundation of their hope; that they are actually intereſted in Chriſt, and thus awfully deceive themſelves: for,

1. Their convictions have not been with reſpect to ALL, but only to SOME particular ſins. They do not believe that, *from the crown of their heads to the ſole of the foot*, they are *nothing but wounds and putrifying ſores;* that every faculty of the ſoul is depraved, and that they are in the ſight of a holy God, both unholy and unclean.—And remember, ſinners, that until your convictions lead you both to ſee, to feel, and to confeſs that you are *poor, and miſerable, and blind, and naked*, they cannot be eſteemed to be any thing more than the convictions of natural conſcience.

ictions are genuine and ſaving, they
: for, mere natural convictions, as
procured ſalvation for ANY, but on
driven MANY to deſpair. But thoſe
convictions which are gracious and
diſcoveries made to them of Jeſus
are made ſenſible of their need of
iis lovelineſs and preciouſneſs, then
created in their hearts after him,
, O that Jeſus were ours!—Now,
xperienced ſuch holy breathings of

ſin, the world, and its pleaſures, before him.—If ſin be cheriſhed, Chriſt hath never been embraced. If ſin and the world rule in the heart, genuine deſires after Chriſt have never been experienced.—O, deceive not yourſelves. You cannot *ſerve two maſters*—CHRIST and BELIAL.

Is it your wiſh to aſcertain whether you have a RIGHT before God to ſit down at his table, and to eat of the bread, and drink of the wine which the great Mediator of the covenant provides for his gueſts? we haſten to give you every requiſite information on this ſubject.

1. You neither have a right before God, nor can you expect to receive the ſacrament in a manner acceptably to him, or profitably to yourſelves, provided you have never been ſeriouſly ALARMED with reſpect to your awful condition by nature, and continue at eaſe in your ſinful ſtate, without manifeſting any concern as to your eternal intereſts, or ever making ſuch enquiries as theſe,—Lord, what will be the end of our courſe, which is ſo oppoſite to that which thou haſt preſcribed in thy word? Do we not evidence, by the general tenor of our converſation, that we are ſtill unconverted, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and wholly under the influence of principles which actuate the men of the world; but which the real children of God never follow? and if left to ourſelves, and ſuffered to purſue the ſame line of conduct, muſt we not for ever periſh? muſt we not expect that our puniſhment will be beyond deſcription, ſince we have ſo long lived under the means of grace, and ſo uniformly ſlighted the offers of ſalvation?——If your minds have never been in any wiſe exerciſed on theſe ſubjects, and if they have never made any abiding impreſſion on your minds, there

t all is not right; yes, that your
ble will neither illuſtrate the glory
e feaſt, nor prove beneficial to your

who is the great Mediator of the
only WAY by which we can obtain
God, never yet appeared amiable
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ent to redeem, willing to ſave, and
he ſinner to the favour and friend-

judgment to yourſelves? O! that your eyes were opened! that you beheld the deplorable condition into which ſin has placed you!—Are you inſenſible of your miſery? the greater is your danger: it is with you as with one who has a member of his body mortified: as long as he has no feeling of pain, eſpecially when the knife is applied to the afflicted parts, the ſurgeon adjudges the wound to be dangerous. Do not think that theſe things are ſpoken and ſo often repeated by the miniſters of Chriſt, only with a view of creating terror in your minds: they declare nothing but ſolemn realities. Say not, that you are not ſo abandoned and wicked as many of your acquaintance are. Say not, that your hearts are not ſo bad as is repreſented, and that therefore you have no reaſon to fear the wrath divine.—My friends, believe us, when we declare that it is impoſſible to expreſs by words the greatneſs of your miſery. If you remain unconcerned, and continue to deſpiſe the offers of ſalvation, do you not act a part more baſe, more ungrateful, and more offenſive to God, than the devils did? They ſinned ONCE, and grace has NEVER been offered to them; conſequently they cannot ſin againſt it: but you have ſinned times and ways without number againſt the God and Mediator of the covenant.—O dreadful thought! another mediator will never be ſent to you. Refuſing to accept of Chriſt, you reject him who alone can ſave. Hear what the apoſtle Paul addreſſes to perſons in your ſituation, Heb. xii. 25, *If they eſcaped not who refuſed him that ſpake on earth, much more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from heaven.* Chap. x. 29, *Of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son*

hope ſet before you. Would to God that theſe things deeply affected your hearts, and made that impreſſion which their vaſt importance merits.

But, CHILDREN OF GOD, we have alſo a word to addreſs to you; eſpecially to ſuch among you whom doubts oppreſs, and fears alarm and diſtreſs. What we have juſt been ſaying, with a view to the conviction of ſinners, perhaps may have been the cauſe of ſome degree of terror to you. It is one of the moſt difficult parts of the miniſterial office, on the one hand, to bring hypocrites and the careleſs from the falſe foundations on which they have raiſed their hopes, and to lead them to a diſcovery of themſelves; and, on the other, not to alarm and overwhelm with greater fear the dear children of God. By experience it is found, that they frequently apply to themſelves, what is ſpoken to awaken the careleſs and unconcerned. And again, what miniſters, who are faithful, introduce into their diſcourſes with a view to animate and to comfort the people of God, ſinners are frequently diſpoſed to apply to themſelves. Hence men are rendered careleſs, or they fall into a fatal deſpondency.

Come hither, then, diſtreſſed and fearful children of God.

1. Is there any thing of which you are more ſenſible, than that you are ſinners—great ſinners, yes, the greateſt of ſinners, and that you merit at the hand of God to be caſt into hell, and experience everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of God? Do you not often even reaſon thus with yourſelves? Can there be found any where, any ſo vile as we are?—any who have ſuch ſinful hearts as we have? And here we ſee the mark which diſtinguiſhes the true Chriſtian from the hypocrite: the latter con-

ıe better than others, and believes
ad as conſcience, the faithful mo-
ıld ſometimes intimate. The for-
onfeſs, that he is the vileſt of the
n that none is ſo polluted and de-
e is—He heſitates not to exclaim,
ſinners. It is from a view of this
whilſt the hypocrite can go on his
joicing, the real follower of Chriſt
s and fear.

are the exerciſes of your ſouls in

anxiouſly deſire greater conformity to his image, but becauſe he *liveth in you?*

4. You perhaps object and ſay, "If Chriſt dwelt "in us, would ſo many evidences of ſinful corrup- "tions remain? We cannot conceive how it poſſibly "can be." But know it, afflicted and fearful ſaints, grace does not inſtantaneouſly and entirely root out the corruptions of the heart. Whilſt life remains, two different principles are found in all Chriſtians; a ſinful principle and a gracious one; and if this were duly conſidered, you could not but readily conclude, that you are in a gracious ſtate: for, muſt you not confeſs before God and the world, that to ſin, is productive of grief to your ſouls? and can you not appeal to the Eternal himſelf, and declare, that nothing would afford you more joy, ſatisfaction, and delight, than to have ſin mortified, and grace more lively, and exerciſed in a higher degree?

But do you ſtill ſay, "Notwithſtanding all this, "we dare not preſume to indulge a hope that we "have grace: for if we were intereſted in Chriſt, and "might call him ours, would not our doubts vaniſh, "and our fears ſubſide? Would not the Lord Jeſus "embrace us in the arms of his love, and permit us "at leaſt to taſte ſome drops of living water out of "himſelf, that *fountain which is opened for ſin and "uncleanneſs?*"

But, O ye children of Zion, who go on your way oppreſſed by ſuch fears, and agitated by ſuch various doubts,—be not diſcouraged, but continue waiting upon the Lord. He is a ſovereign in all his gracious diſpenſations. You are called to live by faith, and not by ſight. If darkneſs obtain, may not the cauſe of it often be found in yourſelves? For,

1. Do you not reſt too much upon your frames?

s are lively, animated, and in the
h joy and conſolation, becauſe you
y ſurrendered yourſelves to Chriſt,
all to be well; and your language
ſtands ſtrong, we ſhall never be
the other hand, corruptions ariſe;
dull and heavy;—then you are in-
that, becauſe it is thus with you, it
you ſhould be in a ſtate of grace.
ſtate merely by the frames of our
ſurd: for it is an eternal truth, that

dence of children, God demands nothing more than the BELIEVING, the WILLING heart.

What! is nothing more than a willing heart required? Where is the perſon who would not be willing, who would not be glad to be ſaved? But ſuffer us to aſk you,

A. Do you not remember the time when you were unwilling; when you were oppoſed to God and his ſervice; when your hearts roſe up againſt the grace offered in the goſpel, and that *narrow way* which our Lord repreſents as leading unto life; when, if not in ſo many words, yet, by your actions, you ſaid to God, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

B. Yes, even after God had given you a view of the nature of his ſervice, had you not many difficulties to ſurmount before you would declare for God, and Chriſt, and depart from your former ſinful purſuits? Did you not meet with much oppoſition from Satan, and the world? Did you not often reſolve, ſaying, Now we will lead different lives from what we have formerly done; henceforward we will live above the world, and ſerve Chriſt.—But have you not been repeatedly diverted from your purpoſe? Did it not coſt you many a ſigh, many a tear, and much poignant diſtreſs, before God, which proved to be too powerful for you; and you were made to exclaim, "Lord, thou haſt turned us, and we were "turned: thou haſt been too ſtrong for us, and to "thee the palm of victory muſt be yielded." Have you indeed experienced theſe things? Is it not both moſt unreaſonable, yes, moſt ſinful too, to *deſpiſe the day of ſmall things?*

C. Was not Jeſus, and his plan of grace, not only in your firſt exerciſes, ſo precious to your ſouls,

ately bade an eternal adieu to the
t we aſk you whether Chriſt and
t NOW wholly delight you? Muſt
confeſs, that ſtill you ſee that your
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eſus more and more? that he be-
more precious and amiable in your
ther lovely; in a word, that it is
uls to be continually deſiring and
: theſe your exerciſes? What does
you have the ſame exerciſes as are

ſatisfaction if you were more holy; and to become ſo, do you not often go to the Lord Jeſus, to receive grace and ſtrength? Does it not create real ſorrow of heart, if, at any time, you have, by an untender walk, reflected diſhonour on his name? What think you? Are not theſe ſo many evidences that Jeſus is the ſupreme object of your love, and that God, in mercy, has viſited you with his ſalvation?

No longer then doubt of your intereſt in Chriſt, and of your having received, out of his fulneſs, his ſaving grace. Come, meditate frequently on his all-ſufficiency. All that is in Chriſt is yours, and purpoſely deſigned for your everlaſting benefit. Are you IGNORANT? with him is WISDOM, to teach you the way in which you ſhould go. Is the load of your DEBT daily increaſing, and does your GUILT accumulate by every repeated tranſgreſſion? with this High Prieſt there is a fulneſs of righteouſneſs. Do you feel your hearts to be polluted and defiled by ſin, and your walk and converſation deficient in tenderneſs and humility? with him is ſanctification for his choſen. Are you ſurrounded by innumerable enemies? he is made of God unto you, complete REDEMPTION. Are you full of wounds and putrifying ſores? Jeſus ſuſtains the name and character of JEHOVAH ROPHE, the Lord that healeth you. Are you dejected and broken in heart? behold in Jeſus that merciful, compaſſionate, and faithful High Prieſt, who is the *conſolation of Iſrael*, the light, life, ſtrength, and power of his people.

Of this fulneſs which Chriſt has for his people, he is always WILLING to impart as they need it. Yes, he always feels for your woes, and is afflicted in all your afflictions. O then, let theſe conſiderations perſuade you to look continually upon him. When

'e of faith to this glorious Mediator,
l caſt upon you a look of compla-
nd ſay, *Thou haſt* RAVISHED *my*
hine eyes.—If you throw yourſelves
: will receive you in mercy, and
y to your ſouls. If you fly to him,
: to you the ſceptre of his grace;
nt love is divine, eternal, moſt
paſſeth knowledge.
nore he gives you an evidence of
another preſſing INVITATION to

But we cannot close this lecture without addressing a few words to you, *children* of God, who have received brighter evidences of your being interested in this Mediator.

1. Let not your hearts only be exercised with respect to God the FATHER, as the God of the covenant, and with respect to the covenant and its several parts; but especially let the eye of faith be constantly fixed on Christ, and his all-sufficiency, as the Mediator of God's appointment. We are fearful that you are not sufficiently exercised with respect to these; and hence, perhaps, it is, that you have so little confidence and Christian boldness, when you approach the Lord's table. You are apt to dwell too much upon your sins, and your indwelling corruptions, which unavoidably must produce fear and painful anxiety. It is good, it is reasonable, to keep our sins constantly in view: there is abundant cause of being ashamed and humbled, on account of your depravity; but your meditations on these should not, as is too often the case, keep you from God. When you reflect upon the aggravated nature of your transgressions, the eye of faith must be fixed on the great Mediator of the covenant, as one upon whom was laid all the iniquities of the whole elect world. Then a retrospective view of sin, whilst it humbles your souls, and makes you appear little in your own eyes, will contribute to your real advantage. By it you will discover your need of Christ, and consequently he will become far more precious to you.

2. Let your souls make a constant use of Christ for SANCTIFICATION; and to this end repeatedly contemplate, and apply to him as one who is all-sufficient, in every respect, to supply your wants, and

you that relief which you need.
ſenſe, at times, of your miſery and
ke uſe of him as your phyſician,
aſes of thoſe whom ſin has deeply
ndered truly wretched. Are you
t from the ways of righteouſneſs?
ne great ſhepherd of the flock, who
ſheep of his paſture, brings them
with peculiar care, guards and
all the aſſaults of hell and ſin.
in darkneſs? apply to him as your

May the Lord, who is able to do for us more abundantly than we can aſk or think, beſtow upon us every needful bleſſing, out of that fulneſs which there is in Jeſus, to the praiſe of the glory of his grace, and to our joy and eternal ſalvation!

AMEN AND AMEN.

THE

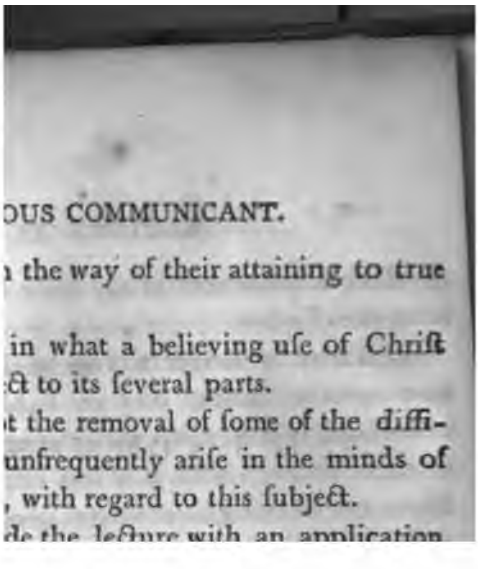
PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture XI.

FAITH'S APPLICATION OF CHRIST, OR THE *USE WHICH THE TRUE BELIEVER MAKES OF THE GREAT MEDIATOR OF THE COVENANT, IN ORDER TO* PROMOTE HOLINESS IN HEART AND LIFE, AND TO INCREASE HIS JOYS AND CONSOLATIONS.

THE all-ſufficiency and willingneſs of the Lord Jeſus to *ſave to the uttermoſt all who come* to God by him, were the delightful themes on which the children of God, who are juſt commencing the divine life, and who, though oppreſſed with doubts and fears, are anxious to enter into covenant with God, were invited to meditate upon in the preceding diſcourſe.—The deſign of the preſent lecture is, to unfold to the view of thoſe who have ſolemnly covenanted with God, in what manner to make uſe of the Lord Chriſt, ſo that they may increaſe in ſpiritual ſtrength, advance in grace, and have their conſolations to abound.—To accompliſh this object, we propoſe,

I. To caution the children of God againſt ſome things which prevent their advancement in holineſs,



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the way of their attaining to true

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unfrequently ariſe in the minds of
, with regard to this ſubject.
de the lecture with an application

the divine influences of the holy ſpirit, to approach unto the Father.

2. There is danger ariſing to the people of God from another ſource: they are liable, at times, to be unmindful of their covenant relation to Jehovah, and in their dealings with him too often conſider themſelves not as being his covenant people, and they conduct accordingly; or if when they go to God they view themſelves as ſtanding in covenant with him, it is a circumſtance which frequently occurs, that they conceive that covenant to be in many reſpects, as that which the Eternal made with Adam, and which required much to be done and performed in his own ſtrength.—In a word, they ſometimes contemplate the covenant, but conſider not that Jeſus is the foundation and prop on which the building reſts; although they obligate themſelves to diſcharge all thoſe duties which God demands of them, yet they muſt not think that by their exertions they can fulfil thoſe divine requiſitions; their reliance, not only in part, but altogether, muſt be upon that grace which is promiſed in the covenant which is derived from the fulneſs of Chriſt, and communicated by the Holy Ghoſt.

3. Many of God's children, in dealing with the Mediator, conſider him too much,

A. In a general point of view. They do not apply to him ſufficiently, with reſpect to their particular neceſſities and circumſtances of ſoul and body into which they have been brought, as if the glorious Redeemer, becauſe he is now exalted to his throne, felt no more concern for his church at large, and no longer was engaged to preſerve and ſtrengthen the individual members who conſtitute his myſtical body. To form ſuch views of Chriſt, reflects on his mediato-

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: Lord Jeſus has ſtill the ſame af-
ple in his ſtate of glory, as ever he
ays of his humiliation, and he per-
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neceſſities.

of God's children are impeded in
contemplating the Mediator too ab-
s GOD, as MAN, or as a JUDGE
nt in majeſty and glory.
requently conſider his GODHEAD
is mediatorial character: then they

ſtagger our faith by ſuggeſting that they are in a dangerous caſe who truſt in man, ſince it is declared in Scripture, that *curſed is he that maketh man his truſt*,—and eſpecially one who was *to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs*.—When ſuch temptations occur, God's children muſt direct the eye of faith to Jeſus in his divine character, and oppoſe the enemy of their ſalvation, ſaying, "I believe in him "as one who is not merely a man, but as one who "is *God over all, bleſſed for ever*."

c. God's children frequently contemplate the Mediator too much in his character of JUDGE, and view him only as he is deſcribed by the apoſtle, Heb. iv. 13, "*Neither is there any creature that is not manifeſt* "*in his ſight; but all things are naked and open unto* "*the eyes of him with whom we have to do*.—Then their language is—"What will be our ſituation when "he ſhall come in the clouds; when we ſhall be pla-"ced before him, to give an account of all the deeds "done in the body?"—To have the eye of faith directed to Jeſus, elevated on his throne of judgment, is advantageous, when it leads us to walk with a holy circumſpection, from an impreſſion that we are under the eye of him who ſees all things. But our views of Chriſt, as Judge, muſt not be ſuch that they terrify our ſouls and fill us with horror and diſmay.—Hear what Chriſt ſays, John xii. 47, *I came not to judge the world, but to ſave the world*. This is not only true of his firſt coming in the fleſh, but alſo of his ſecond coming in the clouds, when he will appear to juſtify publicly the world of his elect.

d. Many alſo entertain the following erroneous ſentiment, by reaſon of their ſmall degree of knowledge, that they indeed have need of the Mediator to juſtify them before God, and deliver them from guilt, but

be aſſured that there is ſuch a fulneſs in Jeſus, if we cannot conſider ourſelves as intereſted in the ſame: therefore God has ſo ordered it, that there ſhould exiſt the cloſeſt union between Chriſt and his people; on their ſide by faith, and on his ſide by the ſpirit, by which they have an intereſt in and a right to the whole perſon of Chriſt, his names, offices, natures, ſtates, and all the riches and treaſures which he enjoys as Mediator: for all that Chriſt poſſeſſes he poſſeſſes not for himſelf, but for his choſen inheritance. While we meet, in the word of God, with ſo many expreſſions, which, in the moſt pointed manner, exhibit this union,—For inſtance, Are believers *partakers of the divine nature?*—He is ſaid to partake of the human, *that they might be one ſpirit with him*—He is a *vine*, and they the *branches*—He is the *head*, they the *members*—He the *foundation* and *corner-ſtone*, they the *ſtones which are built* upon him, and which form one building—He is the *king*, they the *ſubjects* of his kingdom—He the *maſter*, they the *ſervants*—He the *bridegroom*, they the *bride*, who are joined to him in the marriage covenant: now as a woman, even though ſhe were a poor ſlave, being united in marriage with a king, does, in virtue of that relation, obtain a right to all that the king has—to his throne, crown, and riches, ſo it is with the poor ſinner; by reaſon of this intimate union with the Lord Jeſus, he poſſeſſes all his riches, and, on the ſame principle, has a right humbly to demand of him every thing which he needs; and this is the ſource from whence flows all the conſolation and ſatisfaction which Chriſtians enjoy; namely,

That the all-ſufficient Jeſus is their Jeſus, and that they are intereſted in him.

c. To make a profitable uſe of Chriſt, the ſoul

" *will pay thee all:* not with any thing which we have " to bring, but in our ſurety, whom we have received " by faith. In him *thou art well pleaſed;* he hath " brought in a complete righteouſneſs; and, as a " righteous judge, thou wilt not demand payment a " ſecond time."—Upon this they plead the perfect offering of Chriſt, and are emboldened to go into the divine preſence, and enquire, " Lord haſt thou *ſet him* " *forth to be a propitiation by faith in his blood?* Waſt " thou not fully ſatisfied when thou didſt raiſe him " from the dead? Look upon us then in the blood of " thy Son;" and this wreſtling and pleading the merits of Chriſt, and his blood, is ſo acceptable, that believers are often of a new addreſſed,—" Son, daughter, " *be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee. I, even* " *I, am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions, for mine* " *own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins.*" Do the people of God hear the LAW thundering forth its curſes againſt tranſgreſſors, and calling aloud for wrath and vengeance; and do they behold their guilt and breach of the law? here Jeſus again comes as a ſhield and defence. They cannot but acknowledge, yea, they will confeſs, that they have ſinned againſt all the precepts of the law, and *kept not one of them;*— and not only ſo, but they go to the Father again and ſay, " Thou haſt ſent thy Son into the world, that " he himſelf ſhould become a curſe, and thus ſatisfy " the demands of the law: he hath *condemned ſin in* " *the fleſh*, and fulfilled the requiſitions of the law; " and therefore it hath become weak. Let then thy " wrath and vengeance, for which it cries aloud, that " it be inflicted on us, be averted from us."

Does SATAN, the *accuſer of the brethren*, who places himſelf on their right hand, as well as he did on

IOUS COMMUNICANT.

Joſhua, accuſe them as being un-
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himſelf in the balance of the ſanctuary, he will readily acknowledge that, from the *crown of the head to the ſole of the foot* he *is nothing but wounds and bruiſes and putrifying ſores. O wretched man*, he cries, *that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* But is this the caſe? the child of God can derive comfort from a believing uſe of Chriſt. Here the ſoul diſcovers that Jeſus hath not only made ſatisfaction for the guilt of ſin, but hath purchaſed the Spirit, to break the POWER of it in his people, and conſtantly to enable them to make progreſs in holineſs.—And *therefore*, at the ſame time, that, by reaſon of corruptions, he goes bowed down, and is diſtreſſed and humbled, he can go, in faith, to Chriſt; he can lay his corrupt heart and polluted deeds before his feet, and pray, with Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19. *The good Lord pardon me that prepareth my heart to ſeek God, the Lord God of my fathers, though I be not cleanſed according to the purification of the ſanctuary.* The ſoul can further exclaim, bleſſed Jeſus! thou wert born free from ſin that I may be purified from the impurities in which I was born: thou haſt purchaſed for thy people, the Holy Spirit, to advance them in holineſs. Let that Spirit be diſpenſed to me in a higher degree. Thou knoweſt how impotent I am in myſelf, but with thee there is a ſufficiency of ſtrength. Let that ſtrength go forth from thee to break the power of corruptions in my ſoul.

C. The children of God groan and labour under many burdens, afflictions, and diſtreſſes, yea, infinitely more than the world imagine. Afflictions, either of an external nature, as the hatred, perſecutions, ſcoffings, and railings of the men of the world; or internal trials, ariſing either in themſelves or in their families or relations, are often ſo heavy upon them,

" *right hand of my righteouſneſs.*" Iſaiah, xli. 10. It is not for nought recorded in ſacred hiſtory, that when the firſt martyr, Stephen, was about to be ſtoned, he *lifted up his eyes and ſaw the Lord Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God;* as one ready to come to his help, and to receive his ſoul into glory. Acts vii. 56. Thus does Jeſus ſtand, at the preſent day, at the right hand of the Father, to afford divine ſupport to his people in all their afflictions.

D. Beſides external afflictions, the people of God experience internal trials: their ſouls are ſometimes in the dark, by reaſon of divine deſertion, and the hidings of the face of God. Hence it is that they are in fear round about, and they muſt complain and ſay, Lam. i. 16, *Our eyes, our eyes run down with water, becauſe the comforter that ſhould relieve our ſouls is far from us.*

How can perſons thus ſituated ſupport themſelves, and keep their heads above water, but by a believing uſe of Chriſt? By this means they diſcover,

a. That Chriſt is their king, their lord, and their head; with whom, in the moſt intimate manner, they are united, hath himſelf drunken the bitter dregs of this cup, when, in the diſtreſs of his ſoul, he cried out, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* This ſerves to ſhew them the greatneſs and infinite nature of Jeſus' love.—They are led, from the view of this, to ſay, " Hath Jeſus, our Redeemer, in the character " of our ſurety, borne all this diſtreſs in his ſoul that " we may be eternally freed from it? Has he drunken the full cup, and ſhall we not taſte the dregs? This conſideration may ſerve as a ſupport to the ſoul in the darkeſt hours.

b. Again, by a believing application to the Mediator, they diſcover in what manner the Redeemer

he ſeeks to hurry them into ſin: now he injects blaſphemous thoughts, ſo that they are ſifted as wheat, and ſorely oppreſſed. How can a ſoul poſſibly overcome ſuch attacks but by having fellowſhip with the Lord Jeſus? For there is no temptation, however great it may be, but Jeſus has experienced it in his own perſon! When the tempter came to him, Matt. iv.

a. He dared to call in queſtion his ETERNAL SONSHIP, ver. 3, *If thou art the Son of God, command that theſe ſtones be made bread.* Is it then any wonder if he dared to tempt Jeſus to doubt of his Sonſhip, that he will tempt the people of God to doubt of their being ſons and daughters of God?

b. Satan dared to tempt Chriſt with reſpect to the PROVIDENCE of God; when he ſaid, *caſt thyſelf down*, for thou haſt the promiſe, that the angels ſhall bear thee up. ver. 6. Is it then matter of aſtoniſhment, that he ſhould endeavour to excite the children of God to diſtruſt divine Providence?

c. Satan dared to tempt Chriſt to idolatry, *to fall down and worſhip him*, and promiſed to make him an ample reward. ver. 8, 9: is it then to be any longer matter of admiration, that by means of the glittering appearances of the world, he ſhould ſeek ſo frequently to delude and carry away the heart from God, and tempt believers to worſhip the creature inſtead of the creator? How can a ſoul now oppoſe ſuch temptations but by reflecting and reaſoning thus, "Has the pre-
"cious Jeſus borne all theſe awful and ſevere aſ-
"ſaults of hell? have the fiery darts, which Satan
"directed againſt him, returned into his own boſom,
"without injuring the Saviour? has Jeſus triumphed
"over Satan? certainly then he will not ſuffer that
"his people, who are moſt intimately united to him,
"ſhould, by Satan's darts, receive any eſſential inju-

" Lord, our huſband, our friend, our head, our ſure-
" ty and Mediator, will be our judge: he who hath
" here clothed us with his righteouſneſs, and hath
" made us to ſtand before God, againſt all accuſa-
" tions which are brought againſt us, will ſee to it, on
" account of that ſame righteouſneſs, that we be made
" to *ſtand in the judgment*, and will enable us, with
" boldneſs, to lift up our heads. At his bar we have
" not to expect a condemnatory ſentence will be pro-
" nounced againſt us: no; but becauſe he hath al-
" ready enſtamped his image upon us, he will addreſs
" us, ſaying, *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the*
" *kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the*
" *world.*" Matt. xxv. 34.

See, beloved, how a believer may make uſe of Chriſt for his comfort, againſt all the EVILS he meets with in life.

SECONDLY, we muſt in this place ſhew how believers are to make uſe of Chriſt, in order to their advancement in grace: and here we are invited to point out what uſe they are to make of his names, natures, offices, and ſtates; and how as an example, which they are to follow, with a conſtant renunciation of every thing in them, and a daily application to Chriſt and his fulneſs.

But on account of the extenſiveneſs of the field before us, we ſhall only call your attention to the principal points under each of theſe heads, to ſhew the people of God in what manner they muſt make uſe of Chriſt, to promote their comfort and ſanctification.

Firſt, with reſpect to the NAMES which he bears: theſe muſt not be conſidered, ſo much with regard to his divine nature, as to his being Mediator and ſurety; and theſe names, as we have before ſhewn, are

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tor, in reſpect to his WHOLE perſon, as God, as Man, as Mediator.

1. He muſt make uſe of him as *true God and eternal life*, together with the Father and Holy Spirit,

a. To STRENGTHEN and ſupport his faith: for becauſe he is God, the believer may be aſſured that his ſuffering was ſatisfactory; and that nothing is wanting in the great point of procuring the ſalvation of his people: yes, on this account he is the object on whom he may rely, and to whom he may and ought to ſurrender himſelf, being fully confident that as God, he will, by his power, *keep his people*, notwithſtanding every oppoſition, *through faith unto eternal ſalvation.*

b. Is he God? then the believer muſt walk before him in godly fear and reverence; for he, by the eye of his omniſcience, both ſees and knows all things.

2. The Mediator muſt alſo be conſidered with reſpect to his HUMAN nature. It is true, *we know not Jeſus any more after the fleſh*, ſtill we muſt contemplate him as man, not ſo much in his mean appearance, when *he was rejected of men*; this will indeed tend to excite in us a warm affection towards him, becauſe he condeſcended to ſtoop ſo low: but eſpecially we muſt make him the object of our meditation, as he now appears in our nature exalted to glory; and in this view he muſt be uſed,

a. For *ſanctification*; ſaying, "Have we ſuch a "glorious Redeemer in heaven? The more we increaſe "in holineſs, the more conformable we are to his image, "the leſs aſhamed will we be to call him our bro-"ther."

b. To make uſe of Chriſt, as ſeated in glory, at the right hand of God, may afford the ſoul a high degree of confidence in APPROACHING to the throne

nied, both with holy adoration and wonder, *for he is altogether lovely.*

b. Is he the Mediator? then he is the ROCK of ſalvation, on which the whole church is built; and on this the believer may reſt, knowing that the *gates of hell ſhall never be able to prevail againſt it.*

c. As the Mediator, we muſt, by him, approach unto God, and to the throne of grace: without him we cannot have any acceſs to God, but will find the throne always ſhut againſt us. This uſe the apoſtle will have us to make of him: for after having in an extenſive manner repreſented him as the *great high-prieſt*, he concludes with theſe words, *Let us draw nigh with a true heart, in full aſſurance of faith.* Heb. x. 22.

d. Hath God the Father made in him, as Mediator, a repreſentation of himſelf and of his perfections, ſo that Jeſus could ſay, *he that hath ſeen me hath ſeen the Father?* John xiv. 9; then he muſt be the object of our ſerious meditation, that we may *behold, with open face, as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory.* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

e. We muſt make uſe of Chriſt in all his mediatorial relations, as our HEAD, to derive from him, continually, ſtrength: as our HUSBAND and BRIDEGROOM, to be preſerved, defended, and provided for: as our SHEPHERD, to ſecure us from the attacks of that *roaring lion, who is conſtantly ſeeking whom he may devour:* as our STRONG TOWER, *into which we may run for ſafety* in trouble, and in times of danger: as our MERCY-SEAT, who conceals our ſins from the ſight of God: as our ALTAR, from whence aſcends the incenſe of our prayers, as a ſweet perfume: as our BRAZEN LAVER, to ſanctify and purge

and blind; all their knowledge was derived from God: but this prophet, though a *man, is holy, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners*, and never was contaminated with guilt; and, what is more, he is God and man in one perſon; of conſequence *he knows all things.*

b. Jeſus, as prophet, tranſcends all others, with reſpect to the MANNER in which he obtained his knowledge. The ancient prophets derived their information by means of revelations and viſions; but all that Jeſus hath revealed, he had heard and learned of his Father. He was his boſom companion in the eternal counſel of peace; therefore he is the ETERNAL wiſdom: and as man, the ſpirit of wiſdom was poured upon him *without meaſure: hence none ever ſpake as this man ſpake.*

c. He is exalted as a prophet above others, with reſpect to the way in which he teaches his people. The prophets of old communicated inſtruction by word of mouth, and could only bring their doctrines to the EARS of men; but this great prophet brings the truth to the HEART:—his teaching is internal; he *opens the underſtanding:* yes, he ſoftens the hardeſt hearts, and *writes his laws* in them: he directs the judgment, in the examination of revealed truths: he bows the will to embrace them in love, and he gives a deſire and ſtrength to live in an evangelical obedience to them: he makes his diſciples taſte, experimentally, the ſweetneſs and power of them, ſo that they muſt exclaim, *who is a teacher like him?* But what is the uſe that God's people muſt make of ſuch a great prophet and teacher?

a. We muſt receive and embrace him by faith, with holy admiration, humble adoration, and inward joy. The Father ſaid, *this is my beloved Son, hear ye*

ment, conſecration, and in his employment. Waving for the preſent, what might be obſerved, with reſpect to theſe rituals of the Aaronical prieſt, we only remark, that as high-prieſt, it devolved on him to offer ſacrifices for Iſrael; to pray for them; and to enter into the ſanctuary, on the great day of atonement, to bleſs the people.

Now, as the believing Iſraelite, in all this, ſaw the true high-prieſt ſtrikingly repreſented, ſo may we, who behold all theſe things as fulfilled, when we compare the ſhadow with the ſubſtance, ſee a bright diſplay of the wiſdom of God. Does the ſubſtance always infinitely ſurpaſs in excellency the ſhadow? ſo Chriſt, as a high-prieſt, is one whoſe glories far tranſcend thoſe with which Aaron was adorned. Aaron was a *ſinful* man, who muſt firſt atone for his own, before he could make an acceptable offering for the ſins of the people: Aaron was a prieſt, who with ſtrange blood entered into the ſanctuary: Aaron was a prieſt, who, becauſe he could not make an actual ſatisfaction for ſin, could not ſay, at any period of his exerciſing this office, that his work, as a prieſt, was at an end, but muſt daily repeat his offerings for the people. Aaron was a prieſt whoſe interceſſions were imperfect, and whoſe bleſſings were but wiſhes. But here, on the other hand, we behold a prieſt who infinitely excels in all theſe reſpects: Chriſt, our high-prieſt, is WITHOUT SIN. *Such a high-prieſt became us, who was holy, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners.* Heb. vii. 26. wherefore *he needed not to offer for himſelf.* Chriſt, our glorious prieſt, *hath offered himſelf, and by that one offering hath for ever perfected them that are ſanctified:* he hath not ſhed *the blood of calves, bulls or of goats, but his own blood;* that blood

" blood ſhed to pardon our daily deficiencies and de-
" partures from thee? It is true, when we ſurvey all
" our infirmities and backſlidings, we muſt ſtand at a
" diſtance from thee; but it is our earneſt deſire to
" waſh in the blood of thy Son, which always flows;
" there we may, unappalled and unabaſhed, lift up
" our faces unto thee: yes, hath not thy Son alſo pro-
" cured the ſpirit for ſanctification, to cleanſe our pol-
" luted hearts? Was not the very end which he pro-
" poſed to himſelf in dying, that we ſhould *die unto*
" *ſin, and live unto righteouſneſs?*" 1 Pet. ii. 14.

3. We muſt particularly make uſe of Chriſt as a prieſt, *who ever liveth to make interceſſion for us.* Tongue cannot expreſs the ſatisfaction which the ſoul experiences when it views Chriſt as preſent in prayer; when it reflects that he is ſtanding before the throne, as the antetypical high-prieſt; that he bears his people upon his heart; that he is ſo compaſſionate as to render our imperfect ſervices and prayers acceptable unto God; and that he takes the names of his people upon his lips, and ſays, " Father, for theſe I have
" died; for theſe ſhed my blood; let *them not go down*
" *to the pit, for I have found a ranſom for them.*" Job. xxxiii. 24.

4. We muſt uſe Chriſt, our glorious high-prieſt, as the FOUNTAIN, from which ſpring, and the channel through which are conveyed all ſpiritual and heavenly bleſſings. For his ſake God gives his people *all things richly* to enjoy, and upbraids them not. We muſt, therefore, as poor and naked, preſent ourſelves before him, and open our hearts, that the ſtreams of his grace may deſcend in their rich variety and abundance.

5. We muſt endeavour to become ſpiritual prieſts. The common prieſts, under the Old Teſtament, were

VERENCE and reſpect for him, as one who is inveſted with glorious majeſty, and not only be excited to ſing the praiſes of this king, but endeavour alſo to move others to extol him in the higheſt ſtrains. Thus did the Pſalmiſt, perſonating the bride of Chriſt, in the 45th. Pſalm, the ſentiments of which are beautifully expreſſed in the following lines of the poet:

Now be my heart, inſpir'd to ſing
The glories of my Saviour king,
Jeſus the Lord; how heavenly fair
His form! how bright his beauties are.

O'er all the ſons of human race
He ſhines with far ſuperior grace;
Love from his lips divinely flows,
And bleſſings all his ſtate compoſe.

Thy throne, O God, for ever ſtands,
Grace is the ſceptre in thy hands;
Thy laws and works are juſt and right,
But grace and juſtice thy delight.

Let endleſs honours crown his head;
Let every age his praiſes ſpread;
While we with cheerful ſongs approve
The condeſcenſion of his love.

B. We muſt conſtantly own him to be our King. In the obedience of faith we muſt ſubmit to him; embrace him in love, and worſhip him. Pſ. lxv.

C. We muſt, with humble BOLDNESS, approach his throne, as poor and naked in ourſelves, to receive thoſe bleſſings of grace which he diſpenſes to his people; for he is a rich, an almighty and gracious King.

gratitude we owe to God, for that deliverance; the three things which are neceſſary to be known for ſalvation. We may get ſome diſcovery of the nature of ſin, by the accuſations of conſcience: but in all its malignity, together with the wrath of God denounced againſt it, we cannot have it fully exhibited, but by viewing the Son of God nailed to the accurſed tree, to atone for it. Never did God manifeſt his juſtice and holineſs more illuſtriouſly than when Jeſus died: for, had it pleaſed him to have ſpurned from his preſence the whole race of mankind, and abſolutely refuſed ever to have looked upon them in mercy, as he has done with devils, upon their rebelling againſt him, we could then only have ſaid, "God has acted the "part of a righteous judge;" but now, when we behold him ſurrendering his beloved Son to ſuch excruciating torments and ſufferings, he exhibits an holy hatred of ſin: he evidences that he cannot admit the ſinner into fellowſhip with him, without a ſatisfaction be made; and thus declares, that Chriſt, as ſurety, muſt undergo the puniſhment which was threatened to be inflicted upon the workers of iniquity. If now we make a right uſe of the ſufferings of Chriſt, it will ſerve,

A. To make lively impreſſions on our minds, of the ABOMINABLE AND SHAMEFUL NATURE OF SIN. Is it an evil for which there is no remiſſion, but by the blood of the Son of God? this ſhould excite us to a holy watchfulneſs againſt every appearance of it, leſt we be overtaken by it.

B. To make us reflect upon the GREATNESS and inexpreſſible nature of the love of God. Where is love more clearly unfolded to us? where is it ſeen ſhining with brighter luſtre than in the death of Chriſt? The great apoſtle ſays, Rom. v. 8, *But God commend-*

juſtification, ſanctification, and glorification; for, in conſequence of Chriſt having ariſen, the Father declares that full ſatisfaction hath been made to his injured juſtice, and that he can now juſtify the ſinner who believes on him.—Yes, the reſurrection of Chriſt teaches us, that we muſt riſe with him, and live no more for ourſelves, or in ſin; but for that Redeemer who *died for us and aroſe again.* 2 Cor. v. 15. We muſt, therefore, conſtantly plead, that *we may know him and the power of his reſurrection.* Phil. iii. 10.—And thus the reſurrection of Chriſt will ſerve as a foundation, to hope for a bleſſed reſurrection at the laſt day; and thus adminiſter comfort to us whilſt paſſing through this wilderneſs: for the believer may now exclaim, "Becauſe the Head enjoys life and immortality, the members ſhall alſo live with him."

B. Do we view him as one who hath ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, to prepare a place for *his* redeemed, and from thence to ſend forth his ſpirit? this ſtep of his exaltation muſt ſerve to excite our hearts no longer to ſeek things below, but to mount in ſearch of thoſe which are in reverſion for the followers of Chriſt in heaven. Faith's view of an aſcended Jeſus will lead our thoughts upwards, to things heavenly and divine, where the Mediator is, and be a mean to induce us to go to him who ſits on the throne of grace, for an abundant out-pouring of his holy ſpirit.

c. Does Jeſus SIT AT THE RIGHT HAND of God, exalted above all principalities and powers? Is he there as the great head of the church, to preſerve and defend it from all its enemies, and at laſt to take it up to himſelf in glory? certainly this muſt ſerve to encourage and ſupport believers, in all difficulties: hence Calvin once ſaid; "*Whilſt Jeſus ſits*

canvaſs on which the firſt outlines are drawn; and grace as the painting that is gradually advancing to perfection. As an holy painter, the believer muſt examine what touches are wanting, what ſtrokes there are which make the reſemblance leſs ſtriking, and proceed immediately to amend them; and with this he will find work all his days: for the painting will not be complete until he ſhall be made *like unto Chriſt* in glory.

3. And whilſt, on the one hand, in all this the ſoul muſt be as much engaged as if it were able in its own ſtrength to accompliſh the arduous work; ſo, on the other hand, convinced of its impotency, and that it can do nothing, it muſt wholly depend on the ſpirit and ſtrength of Jeſus; crying with that man of God; HOLY JESUS,

" As the image in the glaſs,
" Anſwers the beholder's face;
" Thus unto my heart appear,
" Print thine own reſemblance there.

" Shew me what I have to do,
" Every hour my ſtrength renew;
" Let me live a life of faith,
" Let me die thy people's death."

See thus in as concife a manner as poſſible, this copious ſubject diſcuſſed; a ſubject which embraces the whole of practical religion.

We muſt now attempt to anſwer certain queſtions which may ariſe from what has been ſaid; and which was the third thing propoſed to be done in the preſent lecture.

1. It is poſſible ſome one may aſk, " Can a ſoul

2. Another may ſay, "I know not but I have made uſe of Chriſt to encourage and to advance me in holineſs; but ſtill I continue the ſame I ever was: I do not ſee that I make any progreſs; and therefore I am afraid that I am not really united to Chriſt, and that I have not made a right uſe of him." To a perſon in this ſituation, we obſerve,

A. It may be that thou art, of a truth, UNITED to Jeſus, although thou doſt not lead a life which is marked by a becoming *zeal* and circumſpection. An untender walk always will weaken Chriſtian confidence: and it is generally obſerved, that from thoſe who do not engage, with ardour, in the ſervice of Chriſt, he will conceal his countenance and withhold his influences; which are the fruitful ſources of the believer's joys.

B. But again; your complaint may be altogether GROUNDLESS; for in fact, we may increaſe actually in grace, and yet not be able to diſcern our progreſs: as the twig engrafted upon a tree, although immediately we do not diſcover its growth, ſtill it is united to the tree, and receives ſap and nouriſhment from it. Thus it may be with thee, O Chriſtian! thou mayeſt be united to Chriſt; advance in grace; and yet not have clear views of it: or thy complaint may be occaſioned by an internal view of thy corruptions and pollutions. Art thou brought to probe thy wounds deep, and to ſcrutinize into the evils which lurk within? then thy language is, "I have no grace:"—erroneous ſentiment; thou haſt grace; great grace; that which thy ſoul moſt needs: or thy complaint may ariſe from this, that the Lord conceals from thee thine advancement in grace and holineſs, to keep thee poor and little in thine own eyes; and to make thee walk humbly with him.—O Chriſtian! we are ſo

cations, at the ſame time that there is a fulneſs in him to *ſupply all your needs.*

4. Perhaps others may ſay, "We do indeed go to Chriſt; we fall down before him, and ſupplicate his grace; but we do not experience his divine influences; yea, more, he hides from us daily in a greater degree, the light of his countenance: we continue ſitting in darkneſs: is not this an evidence that we have no fellowſhip with him?"

O! no. The Lord Jeſus deals on this wiſe with his people, oftentimes to try their faith: the ways he keeps with them appear frequently to be oppoſed to their happineſs; whilſt, at the ſame time, he is willing to help them:—Behold an inſtance of this in his dealings with the *man that was born blind*—Jeſus laid *clay upon his eyes.* If we had been ſpectators of this conduct, we would have conceived it to have been a ſtrange mean of effecting reſtoration to ſight: but ſtill it was by this that the cure was produced, and the blind man diſcovered ſurrounding objects.—Jeſus did this to make a more glorious diſplay of his power. We ſee the ſame thing ſtill more clearly exhibited in the caſe of the woman of Canaan; ſhe was conſtantly crying, thou Son of David, *have mercy upon me:* Jeſus heard her indeed, but he anſwered her not a word, except, *It is not meet to give the children's bread unto dogs!* an anſwer this which was ſufficient to have diſcouraged her: the woman heard; ſhe treaſured the words up in her heart; and ſaid, *of a truth Lord! the dogs may eat of the crumbs that fall from the maſter's table.*—This, her perſeverance, was ſo acceptable to Chriſt, that at laſt he ſaid, *woman, great is thy faith.* Matt. xv. 22.—If then you have not the deſired anſwer of peace immediately, yet keep on aſking; Jeſus

as well as the one who has progreſſed leaſt in grace, muſt acknowledge, that in themſelves they have nothing—can do nothing acceptable to God—that they muſt wholly look off from ſelf to Jeſus, and to Jeſus alone, who muſt ſave and give them ſtrength to do that which is good. They experience, more or leſs, that they have never done any action with which God could be pleaſed: but, on the contrary, that they are contaminated and defiled by ſin; yea, they are bold to confeſs that their very *righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags.* Let us now attempt an improvement of this truly intereſting ſubject.

O! poor, ignorant, blind and careleſs worldlings, whoever you may be; of all thoſe things which we have exhibited, you have no knowledge: for as yet you live without Chriſt; you know not what it is to be united to him by faith, nor what it means to derive ſtrength from him. O how great is your unhappineſs and miſery: for as it is the height of happineſs, as it is true joy to have fellowſhip with Chriſt, and to be a partaker of all his benefits, ſo it is miſery in the extreme to be deſtitute of theſe, and to have no right to conclude that Jeſus is your Saviour: for if you live without Chriſt you are without God, without the covenant, and without hope in the world; and your inheritance is everlaſting deſtruction: for Chriſt is *the only name given under heaven, among men, whereby we can be ſaved:* he is the only way that leads to happineſs and to God.

Or doſt thou think, TEMPORARY BELIEVER, *almoſt Chriſtian*, that thy ſtate is not ſo awful as the ignorant and ſecure ſinner, becauſe of the profeſſion of religion which thou makeſt; or becauſe that in reſpect to externals thou equalleſt, yea, perhaps doſt ex-

2. You do not make that believing application by faith to Chriſt, to which you are called: it may be that you make a general uſe of him; but you do not apply to him with reſpect to all the individual acts of your lives, the diſeaſes under which you labour, and the particular ſins which you have committed, ſaying, "Great Redeemer! this ſinful act troubles me; here the wound bleeds; this burden oppreſſes me: O give me grace and ſtrength to overcome ſin, and all the evils which have overtaken me, *for* thou art able."

3. You undertake to do things, too much depending on thine own ſtrength; you are not ſufficiently acquainted with your impotency, and that without Chriſt you can do nothing: and therefore you are put ſo frequently to ſhame. A view of yourſelves which is the reverſe of this; a feeling ſenſe of your being unable to help yourſelves, and an earneſt look unto Jeſus, would ſoon lead you to diſcover, that in your weakneſs he will perfect ſtrength.

4. You do not, as you ought, lay open your empty and barren ſouls before the fulneſs of Chriſt, that he may fill them; you are not ſufficiently anxious to obtain his divine influences; you are inclined to live too much without Chriſt: and is it then ſtrange that he does not beſtow upon thee more of his ſaving benefits, and that you bring not forth more fruit? O come, *lift up the hands which hang down, and let the feeble knees be ſtrengthened.*—You are now again invited to the table of the covenant; there the fountain of ſalvation will again be opened to ſupply every want: there Chriſt is to be ſeen in all thoſe reſpects in which we have exhibited him to you, pictured to the life; there is to be beheld in his names, in his glorious offices, in both his natures and ſtates in which

THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture XII.

ON THE PREPARATION OF THE HEART, WHICH IS NECESSARY, IN ORDER TO A PROFITABLE APPROACH TO THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

MUCH of the profit and bleſſing to be derived from the uſe of the holy ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, depends on a due preparation for an attendance upon it. With that preparation many pious ſouls have but little acquaintance; we therefore conceived it would be of uſe in this lecture to attempt to throw light on a ſubject of ſuch importance to the Chriſtian in every period of the life of faith. Let it, however, be previouſly remarked, that we propoſe not to diſcuſs this point in the moſt extenſive manner, as much has already been written upon it; neither ſhall we enter upon the three principles of ſelf-examination laid down in the Heidelbergh catechiſm, and mentioned alſo in the form of adminiſtration of that ordinance; but we ſhall immediately addreſs ourſelves to thoſe who are partakers of the life of grace in their ſouls, with a view to give them ſome direc-

and conſider in what particulars we have ſinned againſt him, and alſo how far we have ſtrayed from God; and further, that we confeſs our backſlidings, leſt they cauſe the Eternal to hide his face from us.

2. Is a preparation of heart neceſſary, in order to aſſiſt us in the diſcharge of the principal duties of Chriſtianity? in like manner it is requiſite that our hearts be prepared to meet the Eternal in this holy ordinance; for in the ſacrament of the ſupper, God appears as the God of the covenant, who will hold the moſt intimate fellowſhip with his people: here the eye of faith beholds the Lord Jeſus offering himſelf with all the riches of his all-ſufficiency to his redeemed: here he exhibits of anew his willingneſs, as the bridegroom, to eſpouſe them as his bride, to himſelf, and to beſtow upon them all his treaſures.—If then they approach to him in this ordinance, certainly it is reaſonable that they, on their ſide, be ſatisfied; that they are willing and inclined to give themſelves over to the Lord, in the covenant; and how can they be convinced that this is the caſe but by a pious and faithful examination of their hearts, as in the immediate preſence of God himſelf?

3. Is it not neceſſary to have the heart prepared to approach the ſupper, when we conſider that the Lord Jeſus, the great Maſter of the feaſt, is himſelf preſent, to ſurvey with his omniſcient eye, which tries the hearts and the reins, the gueſts who are ſeated around his board, whether they are arrayed with the true wedding garment, and whether they have approached with ſuitable exerciſes? Ought not the conviction that Jeſus was preſent, excite in the ſoul an anxiety, an ardent deſire to be in ſuch a frame as would be acceptable and pleaſing to him?

4. To have the heart prepared, is a duty which is

ſituation to commemorate Jeſus' dying love; therefore the table was every week ſpread, and on every returning Sabbath believers ate and drank in remembrance of him: but no ſooner did this zeal begin to cool in the church, than particular ſeaſons for preparation for the ordinance were ſet apart; and previous to the adminiſtration of this ſacrament, the practice of delivering ſermons applicable to the occaſion was firſt introduced.

Our SECOND ſubject was to point out and to attempt to remove ſome of the obſtacles which hinder the people of God in preparing to meet with their Redeemer at the holy ſupper.

1. There is no greater obſtacle in their way, nor any thing hinders the progreſs of believers in making a ſuitable preparation than this, that they ſeek, by every mean, to put off from time to time commencing this important buſineſs: "at ſome future period," ſay they, "we will begin to prepare; it is yet time enough:" although the miniſters of the goſpel, with a view that they might prepare to meet their God, have already for ſome weeks given public notice of the time of the adminiſtration of the ordinance, yet they ſay, "we cannot undertake it now, but in the following week we will certainly begin."—It arrives; they again poſtpone it from day to day; they have many avocations; they cannot think of doing it in the midſt of their preſſing cares; the conſequence is, that it often happens that they have not left for preparing, perhaps not a ſingle day, yes, perhaps not even a ſingle hour. Would to God that his people would learn to conſider this habitual procraſtination as a ſecret artifice of Satan; that they would be continually upon their guard againſt his temptations,

provement of it.—And is their time thus taken up with every thing but that to which they ought moſt to attend? then he ſo diſturbs their ſouls that they are rendered incapable of attempting to do that which otherwiſe they might have commenced with profit in the ſtrength of Jeſus: we believe many can atteſt the truth of this from their own experience: and is this the caſe with you? humble yourſelves before the Lord, on account of your being ſo deeply immerſed in earthly concerns, that you have ſo little time left for God: but ſtill let not your confidence be ſhaken; improve the few moments you may have left, and if you cannot engage in all the parts of preparation, attend to the moſt neceſſary, and thus diſappoint the adverſary of your ſouls.

3. If we attentively inveſtigate the conduct of the enemies of our ſalvation, it will be found that they are never more active in ſeeking to draw off the heart from God, and to place obſtacles in the way of the Chriſtian, than either immediately before or at the adminiſtration of the Lord's Supper.

The DEVIL, who, as he is always going about ſeeking to lead by his artifices and temptations believers aſtray, evidences alſo his enmity, when they would prepare to come before their God by an approach to the holy ſupper. Do the people of God retire in ſecret and ſeparate themſelves from the world, and enter into the preſence of the Lord? at ſuch times he is buſy to diſturb their minds, and oftentimes to cauſe their thoughts ſo to wander and be ſcattered, that they cannot, with any ſatisfaction, engage in ſecret prayer or other becoming exerciſes. As the communion Sabbath approaches, he ſeeks to make them dread its arrival, and tempts them to view it as a day of ſadneſs inſtead of contemplating it as a day of ſa-

a. Not to be alarmed beyond meaſure when they thus make oppoſition to you; conſider that they always ſhew their enmity moſt when thou art ſeeking to deſtroy their power. Set thyſelf, Chriſtian, in battle array againſt them, and by every mean endeavour to overcome them.

b. Doſt thou find thyſelf unable to make a complete reſiſtance? look up to God; call in the ſtrength of Chriſt; ſeek to ſtrengthen thy heart with grace: acknowledge that thou haſt need of ſupport from the Lord; and go forward to the combat in the might and power of Jehovah alone.

c. And if it ſo happen, that the one or the other enemy obtain any advantage over thee, ſtill let thy courage be kept up, and be not too ſoon nor too much diſheartened; but conſider with thyſelf that, as upon all thy duties, thou muſt write, "I AM UNQUALIFIED *to diſcharge any of them aright, in conſequence of ſin, which continues to cleave to me;*" in like manner, conſcious of thine inability to meet God acceptably at his table; in the ſtrength of thy Maſter, prepare to approach the ordinance, with a view of ſeeking to obtain a ſenſe of pardon, and alſo ſtrength to reſiſt ſin, Satan, and the world.

4. Another obſtacle which prevents the people of God from a ſuitable preparation, is, that many are in the ſinful practice of keeping away from the table of the Lord for the moſt trivial reaſons. The one has a controverſy with his neighbour; another is in diſtreſſed external circumſtances, which wholly occupy his ſoul. A third has ſo much temporal buſineſs on hand that he can take no time for retiring alone, for the purpoſe of engaging in this work.—A fourth has to wreſtle with this or with the other corruption which he cannot overcome, and this prevents the ex-

thou art ſincere and in earneſt.—Say then, "I will preſent myſelf unto God; I will fall down before him with all my ſins; and come before him juſt as I am, and declare before him that I delight in him, and that he is my witneſs how ready I am to have the preparation of heart to meet him.—I will look to him for his ſpirit and ſtrength to influence my ſoul."

In this way thou wouldſt manifeſt thy ſincerity; and the Lord, who knows all thy circumſtances and frames, would not leave himſelf to be without a witneſs.

6. Laſtly, another perhaps will ſay, "I have indeed been engaged in preparation, and I conceived I was in a good frame: I was lively and animated, and yet when I came to the table I experienced but little benefit: it was as if every thing was taken from me; and again I went forward, without preparation, and I enjoyed ſuch comfort that I could ſay, it was good for me to be there: would it not then be better that I ſhould go to the table again, unprepared as I am to approach? for I ſee that my comfort in going forward does not depend on my having made great preparation." We reply to this queſtion, that it is both ſinful and extremely abſurd to reaſon in this manner: would a ſon who has deſerved the rod at his father's hand, but, inſtead of being chaſtiſed, receives from him careſſes and the moſt gentle treatment, abuſe the kindneſs of his father, and ſay, "Becauſe my father hath been ſo gracious and kind, I will go on oppoſing his commands, and continue to merit his diſpleaſure." Ought not his tenderneſs rather to produce ſhame and confuſion of face, and excite a more faithful diſcharge of his duty? and ſhouldſt thou then ſay, that becauſe God, thy Father, when thou cameſt unprepared, hath embraced thee in the moſt affectionate man-

paring for the Lord's Supper, and have alſo endeavoured to remove them.

Let us now examine our THIRD ſubject, which was, to give ſome directions with reſpect to thoſe things with which we ought to employ ourſelves in preparing for the holy ſacrament of the ſupper. It muſt be, however, previouſly remarked here, that it is not our intention to raiſe difficulties in the mind of any perſon; and therefore let none be filled with any apprehenſions that he hath not come aright to the table of the Lord, becauſe he may not have been exerciſed juſt in the ſame manner as we are now about to point out.—We only intend to exhibit to you the means which ought to be uſed, without aſſerting that every child of God, in every caſe, is abſolutely bound to them: for poſſibly the ſituation and circumſtances of many will not admit the obſervance and trial of them all.—If we are conſcious that our omitting to uſe them proceeds not from negligence and inattention, we may be ſatisfied; for the Lord knoweth the heart.

In ſpeaking on the ſubject before us, we ſhall attend to the five following things:

1. Enquire whether it be uſeful and neceſſary to ſet apart a particular day for FASTING and prayer.

2. Mention ſome things which ought to be the ſubjects of our holy meditation when we engage in preparing for the ſupper of the Lord.

3. Shew that the principal part of this preparation conſiſts in a ſolemn renewal of the covenant with God.

4. Enquire whether it would be uſeful to keep an account or regiſter of our experiences between one communion Sabbath and another.

5. Shew how we ought to be adorned in order to

our hearts were affected and tender, no matter; or rather, ſo much the better; for then, without ſpeaking a word, we would be able to convince them of the cauſe.—We ſee a lively inſtance of this in Nehemiah; when his heart was overwhelmed with ſorrow, and his ſoul was engaged in prayer to his God, he did not ſay, "I cannot any longer be the king's cupbearer;" but he continued faithful in the diſcharge of his duty to his ſovereign; and when the king ſaw that his countenance exhibited marks of a diſtreſſed mind, he aſked him the reaſon: at that very time his heart was engaged in prayer: ſee Neh. ii. We may do the ſame.—Let us ſet apart a day for ourſelves, and ſeek to bring and keep our hearts in a praying frame: on ſuch occaſions let us take leſs food than uſual: if we cannot altogether abſtain from our daily work, let us take as much time as poſſibly we can to be in ſecret with our God, and thus ſhew to him, even though it ſhould be but for a few moments, our countenances confeſs before him that he is the deſire and the delight of our ſouls.—None can tell but thoſe who have experienced it, how agreeable it is to be thus exerciſed alone with our God: to paſs a day, previous to our commemorating Jeſus' dying love, in faſting and prayer, is uſeful; for we evidence, by the obſervance of ſuch days, that we deſire to be humbled before God, on account of the ſins of our lives and of our hearts: but this duty, alas! is too much neglected.—Yes, by too many it is not even thought of, except only on the occaſion of obſerving thoſe days which are publicly appointed by the magiſtrate.—That it is a duty, not only the ſaints under the Old, but alſo thoſe under the New Teſtament have taught us.—The Lord Jeſus indeed condemned the impious faſts of the Phariſees, but, at the ſame time, he gave

prayer are at beſt but means, and not ſo abſolutely neceſſary, that, unleſs we uſe them, we cannot receive the bleſſing.

Is it now aſked by any perſon who is inclined to engage in theſe duties, and finds that he can perform them in his family or in private, without being interrupted, "How he may, with the moſt advantage, conduct himſelf on a day of faſting and prayer?"—we anſwer, that he may beſt paſs the day on this wiſe: It may be begun with ſocial prayer; in which the ſins, eſpecially thoſe of the family, muſt be confeſſed, and the ſoul be led to look for pardon and forgiveneſs in the blood of Chriſt:—which ſhould be accompanied with renewed reſolutions, in the ſtrength of the Lord, to walk more tenderly before God. In the next place, each member ſhould ſeek to animate and quicken the other by pious converſation, and by ſinging the praiſes of God, in *pſalms, and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs.* This being done, let each one retire in ſecret:—having entered into his cloſet, let his heart be raiſed up to God, to ſeek his aſſiſtance and divine influences:—then let him enter upon a faithful examination of himſelf:—after ſuch examination, it will next be proper to confeſs all thoſe ſins with which he finds himſelf to be chargeable before the Lord,—the hidden ſins of the heart, with the innumerable tranſgreſſions of his life, the ſmall advancement he has made in grace; in a word, all his ſins, known and unknown, in all their aggravated circumſtances, muſt be laid open before God:—with humility the gracious pardon of them muſt be ſought; and with earneſtneſs, renewed grace, to mortify remaining corruptions, muſt be ſolicited. Again, on ſuch a ſolemn occaſion, a portion of the time ſhould be employed in reading the word of God, or the writings of pious

neſs;—and enquire, with becoming ſerioufneſs, what it is we want of the Lord? If ſuch meditation be neceſſary every day, it muſt be eſpecially ſo, on the occaſion of approaching the table of the Lord.

But to this, many will object,—"We have no "qualifications to engage in ſuch meditation: we "know not where to begin, nor where to end: and "were we to undertake it, it would be in a manner "ſo confuſed and irregular, that it would not be ac-"ceptable to God; and we ourſelves would not de-"rive any benefit from it."

But on this we remark, that it may be that you are ill qualified to engage in a work of ſo great importance; but is this a reaſon why you ſhould wholly neglect the duty? When you were firſt converted to God, were you then qualified to pray, and did you there think it proper to neglect calling upon your God? Certainly not. Did you not then wreſtle with God day after day? Were you not then frequently engaged in pleading for grace, even though you had never learned nor known before what prayer was? Who taught you then to pray, but God himſelf, by his Spirit?—Well—That ſame God can and will qualify you to diſcharge this Chriſtian duty alſo. Only ſeek him for his aid, and apply to the work, depending on him for ſuccour in every part of it.

Do you aſk for counſel and direction, in what manner you may engage and proceed in this buſineſs with profit?—We anſwer:

1. There are many books written on the ſubject of the Lord's Supper: take up ſome one of them, and ſelect ſuch parts from it for peruſal, as are moſt uſeful to aſſiſt you in your meditations: read them with attention, again and again. Or you may re-

following particulars, as ſubjects proper for meditation, previous to an approach to the table of the Lord.

1. Divine and revealed truths in general.

2. Thoſe in particular, which reſpect the Lord's Supper.

3. Thoſe which regard ourſelves.

Firſt, with reſpect to divine and revealed truths in general. Let the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, as each one of theſe divine perſons is exhibited in the plan of grace, become the ſubject of your ſerious and frequent contemplation.

1. Meditate, before your approach to the table, much upon GOD the FATHER, who, though he is exalted infinitely above us and all creatures, and is ſo full of majeſty and glory, that man cannot add any thing to render him more perfect,—yes, who is ſo holy and righteous, that in virtue of his holineſs he muſt have puniſhed the ſinner with eternal deſtruction from his preſence,—yet he hath had from eternity ſuch thoughts of love and compaſſion towards the tranſgreſſors of his law, that he hath choſen ſome of them, in Chriſt, to be *veſſels of mercy*, and given them to his Son, that he, as ſurety, might redeem them;—that he hath made known, in time, this eternal purpoſe of grace, and revealed himſelf to be a God of ſalvation, who will glorify all his perfections in promoting their felicity;—that he hath ſent his Son, his only begotten and beloved Son, into the world, the conſideration of which made Chriſt himſelf to exclaim with aſtoniſhment, *God hath ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son!* John iii. 16. Contemplate this love; it may, as it often does, produce the happy effect of making your hearts go out in returns of love to him.

alſo, with peculiar care, the SEAL which is exhibited in the Lord's Supper, and reflect:

1. What a great and precious privilege it is, that you, who are ſo miſerable, dead, and deſerving of deſtruction, are not only invited to enter into covenant with God, but that Jehovah himſelf will even put into your hands the ſigns and ſeals, and, as it were with an oath, ſwear to be *your God.*

2. Yes, that he invites you to that feaſt, which is for his friends alone;—where you may hold communion with the triune God, with all the ſaints on earth, and with the ſaints who are already around the throne above; in a word, to that feaſt which is a prelibation of heaven, of the *marriage ſupper of the Lamb*, and at which he entertains his bride with the bleſſings of his kingdom.

3. Would you ſee a lively repreſentation of the THREE principal points of our holy religion,—our miſery, redemption's glorious plan, and the gratitude which is due from man to God for it?—theſe you may diſcover in the Lord's Supper. In the BREAKING of bread, behold your miſery, how richly you deſerved to be broken, and how Chriſt, in order to redeem from deſtruction, muſt be himſelf broken for you. In the RECEIVING and EATING of the bread, and in the DRINKING of the wine, you are admoniſhed, that you muſt receive Chriſt, and be united to him by faith, in the moſt intimate manner, even as the bread and wine are united to your bodies. And as it is becoming that we ſhould honour thoſe whoſe bread we eat, ſo in the holy Supper we are taught, that Chriſtians are obligated to honour Chriſt, ſpread his praiſes abroad, and be *holy as he is holy.* And in the ſame way, in the ordinance of the ſupper, the exerciſed believer may find a ſhort ſketch of

of commencing at the loweſt, and thus gradually aſcend to a degree which is more advanced. For inſtance:

1. Have you been born in a land where the goſpel is preached in its purity, and been inſtructed in its precious truths? Then,

2. As to yourſelves:—"Dare we to ſay, the inveſtigation of divine truths has never been of any profit to us? Hath not the Lord bleſſed the word to our ſouls; and have we not been awakened by its faithful preaching, and by meditating on its precious contents?

3. "Did it not produce in particular this effect, that our hearts and our affections went out in love to God and his truths? Are any objects ſo precious to us as God, the Lord Jeſus, and thoſe who love God; and is not this an evidence of God's love to us? for it is impoſſible for us to love God without his having firſt placed his affections upon us.

4. "Hath not God repeatedly, in this or the other occaſion, given us tokens of his favour? Hath he not animated us, and ſpoken, at times, comfortably to our ſouls, and cauſed us to ſee, that he would be our God? Muſt we not confeſs, that we have freely and cordially given ourſelves to him? Are we not now willing to chooſe him for our portion; and have we not a ſincere deſire to live tenderly and in holineſs *before him all the days of our lives?*"

Now, whenever you thus aſcend from the leſs to the greater, would you not, by this mean, be likely to attain to a greater aſſurance of your ſtate? and, in ſuch caſe, your diſtreſs would not prevent your engaging in holy meditation.

Or do others ſay, "We are not in ſuch doubts "with reſpect to our ſtate: but when we look to our

done in particular before commemorating the dying love of Chriſt, we would intimate, that on thoſe occaſions we muſt do it with PECULIAR ſolemnity, and in a more particular manner, becauſe there God is beheld as offering himſelf to be our covenant God, and as preſenting to us the ſeals of the covenant.

In what this renewing of the covenant conſiſts, and how the ſoul is exerciſed in this ſolemn work, we have ſhewn at conſiderable length in the ninth Lecture: therefore we ſhall here omit repeating what was then obſerved.

But, is it aſked by any, "If we ſet a day apart "for renewing our covenant with God, at what pe- "riod of ſuch day muſt we be engaged in this buſi- "neſs? Muſt we commence or end the day with it?" We ſhall not determine this point, as it is a matter of perfect indifference. Engage in it whenever the Lord awakens or excites you to it, though it ſhould be at the beginning of ſuch day. Whenever you find your ſouls to be thus awakened, THEN commence the ſolemn work. When the Spirit breathes in the heart, that time muſt be improved, if we would be ſucceſsful in the attempt.

But methinks we hear you ſay, "If God, alas! "ſhould not awaken our ſouls in this manner, and "we continue dull, ſtupid, and lifeleſs, muſt we then "omit it, and wait until he cauſe our ſouls to be "thus exerciſed?"

We anſwer: It is certain that we are more ſincere and animated in this work, and engage in it with greater joy and with brighter proſpects, when God thus meets with the ſoul: but, though this ſhould not be the caſe, ſtill on no account whatever ought we to omit engaging of anew to be the Lord's, when about to commemorate his dying love at his table.

ſoul, and the peculiar way in which it was exerciſed, particularly at the time of preparation.

On this queſtion we previouſly remark, that we would not raiſe difficulties in the way of any individual; for there are, no doubt, many who are not qualified for an undertaking of this kind, and who, were they to ſet about it, perhaps might be otherwiſe employed to more advantage. When this is the caſe, it is beſt to omit it. But, on the other hand, if the people of God have TIME, opportunity, and are in ſome degree qualified, in ſuch caſe, we conceive, that to keep a regiſter of their experiences would be attended with much profit: at leaſt, many experienced Chriſtians have found it ſo. To regiſter our ſins, our graces, and the particular circumſtances which have befallen us, is calculated to produce the beſt effects. When we afterwards peruſe with attention the diary of our lives, now, it may be an excellent mean to cover our faces with ſhame, now to comfort us in the midſt of ſcenes the moſt diſtreſſing and difficult, and now to awaken and arouſe us into life, when we feel our frames to languiſh, and all ſpiritual animation is apparently gone.

But, in particular, to keep a regiſter of this kind is very uſeful when engaged in preparing for the Lord's Supper. But here it muſt be obſerved,

1. That it would not be beneficial, at this time, to note down every thing which occurs; for this would take up too much of our time, and render us unfit for diſcharging other duties.

2. In particular, we ſhould be careful to regiſter what was the ſtate of our ſouls upon the day of preparation; whether the heart was lively and animated; whether God embraced the ſoul in love; or whether we were then *in darkneſs*, and *ſaw no light*.

God's aſſiſtance would tend to afford us encouragement.

4. Further, the keeping of a regiſter of this kind will ſerve to teach us, that we conſtantly ſtand in need of Jeſus, as our *all and in all.* When reviewing it, we behold the number of our ſins, we will, doubtleſs, be led to lay them at the feet of Jeſus, and ſay; "Behold, Lord! here is the black cata-"logue of our ſins! We ſeek the pardon of them "in thy blood, and earneſtly ſolicit the power of thy "Spirit to mortify them. And behold too, here is "the liſt of our duties: they have, indeed, been im-"perfectly performed, and greatly defiled by ſins, "but thy perfect righteouſneſs *cleanſeth from all ſin.*"

5. When our hearts are dead and inactive, and we look to our former frames, when our ſouls were lively and animated, this may ſerve to rekindle in our cold hearts the flame of ſacred love, and make us more engaged and zealous for God, and the glory of his name.

But perhaps ſome may ſay, "Whenever we take "a retroſpective view of former experiences, and "conſider our preſent caſe, we find that it is not "amended: we do not diſcern that we have ad-"vanced in the divine life: and the conſideration of "this produces much diſtreſs and anxiety reſpecting "the truth of grace in the heart. Now, what is the "cauſe of this want of improvement? Does Jeſus "want ſtrength, or does the fault lie at our own "doors? Do we ſeek him aright? What judgment "muſt we form of ourſelves?"

1. Your anxiety on this head will work no evil, as it brings you to examine and ſcrutinize your ſtate and condition.

2. It may have the bleſſed tendency of exciting

frame by which the ſoul, ſeeing the precious treaſures of grace which God in Chriſt, in a covenant way, will give to ſuch wretched ſinners, ſinks into deep humiliation, is loſt in wonder and adoration, and with Jacob, exclaims,

Gen. xxxii. 10, *Lord, I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou haſt ſhewed unto thy ſervant:*

And with David, when God made ſuch precious promiſes to him and his houſe,—

Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto? and what can David ſay more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knoweſt thy ſervant, 2 Sam. vii. 18, 21. He was ſo overwhelmed at the view of God's goodneſs, that he could ſcarcely find words to expreſs the ſenſe he entertained of his unworthineſs. That man is poſſeſſed of the moſt grace, who is moſt humbled on account of what he hath received from the Lord. To be in a meek and lowly frame of heart, glorifies God in the higheſt, and therefore cannot but be moſt pleaſing to him: for, *Thus ſaith the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit,* Iſai. lvii. 15. He is alſo ſaid expreſsly, 1 Pet. v. 5, to give *grace to the humble.* In SUCH a frame of ſoul it is abſolutely neceſſary to approach the table of the Lord: for then, and then only, when the ſoul is truly humble, can it be expected, that the Lord will reveal himſelf unto it in his love and grace.

2. We muſt not only be adorned with an humble frame of heart when we prepare to meet the Lord in this ordinance; but, that we may be acceptable gueſts, we muſt have our *faith* fixed on the fulneſs,

moment's reflection upon this declaration cannot but urge us to approach, and to ſay, "Lord, though "thou art high and holy, yet, becauſe thou art the "God of love, and makeſt ſo free an offer of thyſelf, "we come to thee indeed with humility, but at the "ſame time with boldneſs and filial confidence, to "receive at thy hands the proffered bleſſings of "grace." This is to come with *boldneſs to the throne of grace*, to which Paul exhorts the Hebrews, chap. iv. 16.

5. As a perſon who is about to meet with his beſt friend, makes every preparation to receive him well, and brings with him what he knows will be moſt acceptable to him; ſo muſt the believer, who at the table wiſhes to receive Jeſus, alſo endeavour to be in that frame which will be moſt agreeable to him. But what is that frame? It is a cordial deſire, a longing, an inclination of heart towards the Lord Jeſus. Then is the ſoul properly exerciſed, when it can ſay, "O that my faith may be in ſuch lively exerciſe, that I may come unto Jeſus with as much joy as I can approach unto his table; that I may with the eye of faith look upon Jeſus with as much ſteadfaſtneſs as with the eye of my body I can behold the ſigns; that I may with the feet of faith run towards him, that I may with the hand of faith take him, and become ſo united to him, as the bread and wine, when taken, become united to the body. Such a frame of heart is agreeable to Jeſus:—he then ſees that the ſoul is truly delighted with him.

6. Eſpecially we muſt have our LOVE to God, to the Lord Jeſus, and to all the ſaints, excited in us; for, in the Sacrament, all is love, that is exhibited to our view. There GOD THE FATHER reveals himſelf as the God of love, who, from pure and un-

ficulties which may be raiſed againſt what we have ſaid in the courſe of this lecture.

Theſe are of two ſorts: either thoſe which are made by NATURAL men, or thoſe which are raiſed by TRUE BELIEVERS.

FIRST.—NATURAL MEN will raiſe many objections againſt what we have advanced on the ſubject which has been under conſideration.

1. Some will ſay, "Can it be poſſible that believers now are called to perform ſo many ſevere and painful duties, ſeeing they live under the New Teſtament diſpenſation, have put off the yoke of bondage, and are *called to liberty?* This appears to be oppoſed to the very nature of the new covenant, which requires that we ſerve God in the Spirit." To this objection we reply,

a. They who thus ſpeak, evidence that they are no true Chriſtians, and that they ſtill are unacquainted experimentally with what it is to ſerve God in the Spirit.

b. And although it be true that God hath delivered his people from the yoke of bondage which had place under the Old Teſtament, believers are not therefore free from obligation. O no! They have taken upon them willingly the delightful yoke of Chriſt, who ſaid, *My yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light,* Matt. xi. 28. And ſo far from conſidering that yoke to be a burden, they on the contrary declare, that it is all their deſire, joy, and comfort. They know that *his commandments are not grievous,* 1 John v. 3.

2. Others ſay, "Yes, duties muſt be performed, and God will reward us on account of them: *for he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.*" Perſons of this caſt reſt upon works which they have

many objections as to what has been ſpoken, which we muſt endeavour, in a few words, to obviate.

Perhaps many may ſay, "Is there ſo much required for a ſuitable preparation? We know not that we have ever been prepared in a right manner; and therefore have reaſon to apprehend that we have never attended the Lord's Supper with any advantage."

To this we reply in general, what has been already remarked, that we would not bind men to the obſervance of all theſe duties as abſolutely neceſſary, nor do we aſſert that thoſe have never communed acceptably to God, who have not preciſely followed our directions—By no means. Hath God awakened you, and in ſome other way been preparing your hearts? praiſe him for it; and let not diſtreſſing fear afflict you.

Or, perhaps your circumſtances have been, or are at preſent, ſuch as to prevent you from complying with all the directions which have been given. You are deſtitute either of a ſufficient knowledge of divine truths, or, having not yet been long on the way of life, you have as yet but little experience. If this be ſo, then the Lord requires it not of you. A father will not be diſpleaſed with his child that is juſt beginning to learn, becauſe he cannot do as much as one that is more advanced; but is ſatisfied with him if he only find a ſincere inclination to comply with his requiſitions. Thus, the Lord does not require of you as much as of thoſe who have made farther progreſs in the divine life. *But if there be a willing mind he accepteth us, not according to what we have not, but according to what we have.*

Or, it may be that you are involved in much CARE and BUSINESS, ſo that you cannot ſpare ſo

life and ardour than not to pray at all? Act the ſame part in regard to preparing for the Lord's Supper. Let it be to you a cauſe of ſorrow, that you are ſo ſpiritleſs when engaged in it. But ſuffer not yourſelves to be baffled. Go with that cold and lifeleſs heart to God, and ſay; "Lord, thou art our witneſs, what our inclinations were: thou knoweſt that our wiſhes were, to have been more ſincere in the work; but thou haſt not been pleaſed to ſend the ſweet influences of thy Spirit into our ſouls. We leave the work with thee. Pardon what thine holy eyes have ſeen amiſs whilſt we have been engaged in performing it." Perhaps the Lord may meet you at his table, either now or at ſome future time; and even though this ſhould not be the caſe, let it be your conſtant ſtudy to continue faithful in duty.

Do you ſtill object and ſay, "If we engage in preparation, and are ſo faint and lifeleſs that we can find no ſatisfaction in it, but inſtead of affording comfort, it occaſions diſtreſs;—ſeeing the Lord looketh on the heart, and if that be not right, nothing that we do can be acceptable to him."

It is true, the *heart* is principally to be attended to in duty; and the work of preparation is both agreeable and eaſy, if we cordially engage in it: but if, on the other hand, this be not the caſe, let it not tend to diſtreſs and alarm you, who thus complain; for your very complaint is an evidence that you cannot reſt in any external duties, and that you are not ſatisfied unleſs your hearts be wholly engaged in them. Yes, from your complaint it appears, that the chief deſire of your ſouls was, and now is, to have fellowſhip with God. Continue then in the uſe of means, depending on the Lord for his bleſſing. It often happens, that we begin with a dull and ſluggiſh

THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture XIII.

ON THE CONDUCT NECESSARY TO BE OBSERVED BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD, ON A COMMUNION SABBATH.

HAVING, in the preceding lecture, exhibited the manner in which a Chriſtian ought to be prepared for an approach to the table of the Lord, we now proceed to conſider the CONDUCT proper to be obſerved by the believer on the day on which the holy Supper of the Lord is adminiſtered. And in doing this, we ſhall,

1. Make ſome previous admonitory remarks; and,

2. Then conſider the ſubject itſelf; or, in other words, point out what that conduct is which is proper to be obſerved on a communion ſabbath by thoſe who are about to approach the table of the Lord.

FIRST. We remark,

1. That the children of God ought to be on their guard leſt they come forward in a CARELESS and INCONSIDERATE manner, without a becoming reverence of mind, or a due ſenſe of the ſolemnity of the ordinance. When we have to do with the God of heaven and earth, we muſt watch the heart with

ſhould not impede thy confidence and thy joy. Haſt thou, when engaged in preparing for the Lord's Supper, examined thy heart? Muſt thou not acknowledge, that thou haſt obtained, in ſome meaſure, that temper which the Lord requires, and that thy heart is inclined to ſeek him in truth? In ſuch caſe, thou muſt view this ſacrament as a joyful feaſt, at which the full bounties of grace are offered to thee,—at which a triune God appears deſcending from heaven,—the FATHER manifeſting himſelf in his everlaſting love, in the miſſion of his Son,—the SON exhibiting himſelf as the ſurety and mediator, who hath given himſelf to the death of the croſs for thee, and as the merciful High-Prieſt, who will meet thee in love, and who tenders himſelf in all his offices to thee, ſaying, *Look unto me: open thy mouth wide, I will fill it*,—and the HOLY GHOST preſenting himſelf ready to take thy hand and put it into the hand of Chriſt, and thus to unite thee to him in the cloſeſt bonds of friendſhip and affection, who will apply the benefit of his death to thee, and ſeal internally to thy ſoul all that which the external ſigns repreſent. When thou thus contemplateſt the ordinance of the Supper, unbecoming fears ought to ceaſe, and ſtrong and ardent deſires of approaching to thy Saviour God ſucceed.

3. Again, on a communion ſabbath, be adviſed to engage in the ſolemn buſineſs of that day in an ORDERLY manner. It often happens, that the people of God are at a loſs what firſt to do on that day;—whether to read, to pray, to ſing, or to be engaged in holy meditations in ſecret. And while they engage in either, Satan their ſubtil enemy ſeeks to draw off the heart, and incline the mind to engage in ſome different work. Let them not, however, be influ-

prepared to approach, and reſt upon this, then we may frequently find the heart dull and lifeleſs, and the Lord at a diſtance. Thus Jehovah ſhews, that he is a ſovereign God, and that every bleſſing depends on him. Means are ours, but ſucceſs is from the Lord.

Having made theſe previous remarks, we now go on to the main point of which we were to treat, viz. To SHEW particularly the CONDUCT ſuitable to be obſerved by the people of God, on a COMMUNION ſabbath.

We would not have any one to think, that if he fail in the obſervance of any of the directions now to be given, that therefore he does not go aright to the table. What we ſhall here offer is only by way of advice; and if it pleaſe the Lord to lead you in ſome other way, that muſt be purſued.

To ſhew then, how believers ſhould conduct themſelves, from the commencement to the cloſe of a ſacramental ſabbath, we will obſerve the following order; ſhewing,

1. What is to be done in the MORNING, before we leave our houſes;

2. What we ought to do, when leaving our houſes to enter into the houſe of God;

3. How we ought to deport ourſelves in the time of divine ſervice;

4. How we ought to be exerciſed whilſt the form of the adminiſtration of the Lord's Supper is read;

5. How we ſhould be employed in drawing near to the table;

6. And laſtly, what we have to do, after ariſing from the table, in returning to our houſes, and throughout the remainder of the day.

Under theſe ſix particulars, every thing neceſſary

of the word of God, and meditation, either on thoſe points in general which, in his preparation for the ordinance, have been the ſubject of his reflection, viz. God in his glory, Chriſt in his fulneſs, and the covenant of grace with its bleſſing;—or, more particularly, on the ſuffering and death of the Lord Jeſus, and the great privilege which he expects to enjoy, of holding fellowſhip with God, with the ſpirits of *juſt men made perfect*, already around the throne, and with all the ſaints compoſing the church militant on earth, and of having a prelibation of the bleſſedneſs which ſhall be enjoyed by the people of God in glory, who participate of the marriage ſupper of the Lamb.

Such meditations are neceſſary, becauſe it may happen that the ſoul, which may have been much enlivened in its preparatory exerciſes, may now find itſelf under much deadneſs, and ready to complain, "My activity is ſadly abated; my ardour is gone." Now nothing will tend more to reſtore that frame of mind which is ſo much to be deſired, than a recollection of thoſe truths which God had before made inſtrumental of producing thoſe lively impreſſions, the want of which are now lamented.

The pious communicant ought next to engage in devout THANKSGIVING and fervent PRAYER.

1. In devout THANKSGIVING for the opportunity which God is giving him, of *going up to his houſe with the multitude that keep holy day*, not only to be inſtructed in his ways, but even to ſit with the King himſelf at his table: to be *abundantly ſatisfied with the fatneſs of his houſe*, and to *drink of the rivers of his pleaſure;* that he may again, before God, angels, and men, profeſs to be *the Lord's;* that he will cleave to him, and, in virtue of the offering of his Son Jeſus,

abroad his love in our hearts; and even though we ſhould not receive any extraordinary communications of grace at the time, yet we may glorify God by earneſtly ſeeking his face, and manifeſting that we are anxious for his bleſſing, and that we eſteem *his favour to be life, and his loving-kindneſs to be better than life.*

As this is the duty of every individual perſonally, ſo it will be proper for heads of families, and other ſuitably qualified perſons, to employ the remaining time in the morning, in reading a portion of the word of God together, and in ſocial prayer; and as a communion ſabbath is a particular ſeaſon for holding Chriſtian fellowſhip, they ought to pray, not only for thoſe who are preſent, but for abſent Chriſtian friends, eſpecially for their miniſters, that God would enable them to diſcharge the duties of the day, to his glory, and the edification of his people; that he would bleſs the congregation, ſatisfy his children *with the fatneſs of his houſe,* and cauſe them to drink abundantly of thoſe ſtreams which flow from the fountain *opened to the houſe of David and the inhabitants of Jeruſalem for ſin and uncleanneſs.*

Theſe duties being performed, either alone or with the family, the communicant ought carefully to preſerve a calm and compoſed frame of mind, guarding againſt any thing which may tend to divert the mind from God and the approaching ſolemnity. We have, my brethren, treacherous hearts, an implacable adverſary, and it is not eaſy to tell how trifling an incident may lead us aſtray: we therefore, on ſuch an occaſion, have the ſtrongeſt motives to urge us to vigilance.

Are pious communicants thus to conduct on the morning of a ſacramental ſabbath?—let us now, in

eyes to rove abroad. By idle converſation, and an attention to external objects, we are in great danger of having our hearts drawn off from things heavenly and divine. As we cannot, at the ſame time, contemplate different objects, it is certain, that if our attention be directed to things temporal, thoſe which are ſpiritual will eſcape our view; and Satan, who is an artful foe, improves every opportunity to miſlead us. He places himſelf in the midſt of us, when we appear in the preſence of the Lord, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to him by what means he diverts us from duty. It will therefore be expedient, in the preſent caſe, to keep ourſelves collected within ourſelves, without paying any further attention to others than what common courteſy requires.

3. Departing from their houſes, pious communicants may very applicably call to mind the words of David, Pſ. xlv. 10, *Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear: forget alſo thine own people and thy father's houſe: ſo ſhall the king greatly deſire thy beauty*—And ſay, "As we leave our houſes, ſo it is the deſire of our hearts to leave our ſins behind us: as Iſrael left Egypt, and Lot left Sodom without looking back, we would forſake all worldly cares, and employ ourſelves in ſeeking thoſe things which are above."

But, THIRDLY, let us enquire how pious communicants ſhould deport themſelves during the performance of DIVINE ſervice.

1. Let them repair in ſeaſon to the houſe of God, that they may engage in his worſhip from its commencement. To the ſhame of many be it ſpoken, that the ſinful cuſtom obtains, as well on communion ſabbaths as on ordinary occaſions, of appearing at a late hour in the courts of the Lord; as if they con-

any part does not agree with their particular frames, or is not adapted immediately to their caſes, it is therefore USELESS to them. No: let them cordially engage in the whole of the ſervice: every part of it may be profitable to them, and afford ſomething peculiarly adapted to their very caſe. When they hear the word of God read, and particularly ſuch parts of it as are uſually read on a communion ſabbath, this may be a mean of exciting their love to its divine Author. When they ſing his praiſes, they may be enabled to make *melody in their hearts to the Lord*. When the miniſter begins to pray for a bleſſing,—when he pleads for divine aſſiſtance,—let them ſubjoin their entreaties that he may be aided in the diſcharge of his duty, and become to them *a faithful ſteward of the myſteries of God*. While he prays for the congregation, let them cordially unite in thoſe ſupplications, and thus join in the communion of ſaints; and then, if the Lord may be pleaſed, in anſwer to theſe prayers, to quicken and animate his miniſtering ſervants, the ſouls of his people may be duly affected and edified. Let them beware of wandering thoughts, even though they may be good thoughts; attend to all the truths which are delivered; apply them to themſelves, and eſpecially, when the marks of grace are laid down, let them examine their hearts by them. By this they may be both encouraged and confirmed.

We now proceed to the FOURTH point, namely, the MANNER in which communicants are to deport themſelves, that they may hear with advantage the FORM of the adminiſtration of the Lord's Supper read.*

We obſerve, in general, that their minds ſhould

* See this form in the Appendix.

I know too, what a deſire and purpoſe of heart I have had, in the name and ſtrength of the Lord, TO BE HOLY, to mortify ſin, and thus to govern myſelf all the days of my life, that I might ſhew true thankfulneſs to God, and walk uprightly before him; and becauſe I love God *who hath begotten, I alſo love thoſe who are begotten* of him; and have therefore LAID ASIDE, UNFEIGNEDLY, ALL HATRED AND ENMITY AGAINST MY NEIGHBOUR, and, as much as poſſible, deſire to walk in peace with all men.

3. Do we hear ſet forth in that excellent form of adminiſtration, the ſins and offences which deprive perſons of their right of approaching to the table? this may excite the ſoul to gratitude, and lead it to ſay, "Lord! by thy grace I have been preſerved in a great meaſure from thoſe groſs ſins; and when I may have offended in any of thoſe points, upon a conviction of my offences, I confeſſed them before thee, fled to the blood of Chriſt for pardon, and through thy grace and Spirit, have had the power of them broken."

4. Does the form obſerve, that communicants do not come to the table TO DECLARE THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT SIN; but on the contrary, do they teſtify THAT THEY SEEK THE PARDON OF SIN OUT OF THEMSELVES IN JESUS CHRIST, and from his Spirit, ſtrength to make oppoſition to it?—this may ſerve to encourage and comfort thoſe who, feeling the power of corruption, would often ſtand afar off, and be afraid of approaching,—and cauſe them to ſay, "Lord! thou art my witneſs, that I come to this ordinance to experience the virtue of Jeſus' blood, *which cleanſeth from all ſin;* to give my unclean heart to him, that he may *purify me from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit.* Thou knoweſt

ſion *with the mouth, but believe with the heart unto ſalvation.*

Thus to uſe this excellent form, will render it of advantage in preparing the people of God for partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Now follows the FIFTH and principal point to be inveſtigated, namely, HOW THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE TO BE EMPLOYED IN DRAWING NEAR TO THE TABLE.

Here it muſt be premiſed, that all thoſe who approach aright, (for we are now ſpeaking to thoſe only) muſt conſider themſelves as the members of one body, united with the ſame head. This muſt always be kept in mind, that we may deport ourſelves as members worthy of ſuch a head. In order to this, ſeveral things are to be attended to, ſome of which reſpect our EXTERNAL deportment, and others our INTERNAL exerciſes.

As to our EXTERNAL deportment,

1. We muſt be careful to avoid DISORDER in approaching to the table, and not conſider it as eſſential whether we come firſt or laſt; for, whether we come firſt or laſt to the table, we eat of the ſame bread, and drink of the ſame wine, and thus may hold communion with all the ſaints of God, even with thoſe who are not preſent.

2. Be not too much ſet upon having your SEAT near the miniſter, with a view to receive the bread and wine from his own hands; and in order to this, beware of CROUDING or paſſing by thoſe who are before you. This is ſuperſtition. It is indeed the practice of ſome; but it is folly. Miniſters can give only the external ſign, but the efficacy is from God. If Jeſus do but reach out to us the ſceptre of his love, it will be a matter of perfect indifference whe-

6. Thoſe who view themſelves as believers, united to Chriſt, and to each other, muſt pray for their brethren in their common Lord, that God would be pleaſed to make them experience his grace; that at the table they may be *abundantly ſatisfied with the fatneſs of his houſe, and be made to drink of the rivers of his pleaſures.* When we are enabled thus heartily to engage in prayer, it is not eaſy to tell what may be the efficacy of theſe addreſſes.

Theſe things we have thought proper to mention relative to our external deportment: and previous to our paſſing on to that which appertains to the internal exerciſes of communicants, we would remark, that perhaps it may be aſked, "Which is the beſt method to be purſued by miniſters in diſpenſing the ordinance?—whether to confine themſelves to the ordinary words which are in uſe in diſtributing the bread and wine, or whether to make ſuch obſervations as he conceives to be moſt applicable to animate and encourage the hearts of God's people."

We reply, that ſome of the communicants preſent may enjoy ſuch frames, that they do not require an addreſs to be made to them, or any thing to be ſpoken in order to aſſiſt their meditations. Such may in ſilence be exerciſing faith and love: God may meet them: the going out of their affections to him may be anſwered with further manifeſtations of his love to them. For perſons of this deſcription, it might perhaps be beſt not to interrupt their devotion by any diſcourſe. But ſeeing ſuch are by far the ſmalleſt number in theſe days, when we diſcern ſo little of ſpirit and life, and when ſo many, inſtead of approaching with confidence, ſtand afar off, full of diſtreſs, afraid to apply to themſelves the ſalvation propoſed to them for acceptance, and dare not to take

faith, taſte his goodneſs and his love. With ſuch profeſſions, let him take his ſeat at the table.

If it be aſked, what ought to be the ſubject of his meditation when ſeated there? we anſwer, as has been before remarked, that becauſe communicants are to be at the table but for a ſhort time, let them not aim at doing too many things, but quietly wait upon the God of their ſalvation. Let them bring the empty veſſel of their hearts to God's all-ſufficiency to *receive grace for grace.* Who can tell but that he may ſpeak peace to them, and embrace their ſouls in the arms of his love!

But, ſince there are no promiſes that God will, without means, meet with them, they muſt not be inactive. Nothing becomes them better, than that they be deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of their unworthineſs, emptineſs, and obnoxiouſneſs to condemnation before God; and ready to ſay, "We are worms of the earth, ſinful duſt and aſhes. May WE ſit down at the table of the Lord? May we eat of his bread, and drink of his wine? May we enjoy the privilege of entering within the palace of the King? Are the riches of his houſe, and the bleſſings of his kingdom diſtributed to us? Lord! we are *unworthy of the leaſt of all thy mercies and of all thy truth,* conferred by thee upon us. Wilt thou deign to look on ſuch creatures as we are? What ſhall we thy ſervants and handmaidens ſay unto thee? *Lord, Lord, we are unworthy that thou ſhouldſt come under our roof.*" Language cannot deſcribe how ſweet, how reviving to the ſoul, and how delightful in the eyes of God, ſuch frames are. He will manifeſt his grace to ſuch perſons. But this ſight of their unworthineſs ſhould not ſo affect them as to make them loſe their confidence, continue in unbelief, keep at a diſtance from

begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. All this I offer to you; and, to remove your unbelief, behold the viſible tokens by which I confirm the offer! Take theſe ſigns: ſay AMEN to my gracious propoſition: in uſing them, embrace my Son; and then will you attain to life eternal, and derive ſatisfaction and comfort from me.

At the table, COMMUNICANTS may alſo ſee the LORD JESUS preſented to their view as hanging on the croſs, who out of pure love for ſinners gave himſelf up unto death, and ſhed his precious blood to redeem them from deſtruction. Think, beloved, that you hear him ſaying to you, "My afflicted children, dejected and diſconſolate as you are, ADVANCE. Why do you keep at ſuch a diſtance from me? I, your maſter, call you. I have procured for you an everlaſting ſalvation, which I will alſo apply to you. I ſtand ready to reach out to you the ſceptre of my love. I will embrace you. I offer to you all my treaſures. Come, look unto me: in me, the Lord, *are righteouſneſs and ſtrength.* Although your wants be many, and your caſe be miſerable, I have a fulneſs which is ſufficient to ſupply your wants, and deliver you from your wretchedneſs. My name is *the Lord that hath compaſſion on you.* I am the kind Samaritan who will bind up all your wounds. Only come to me: *I will in no wiſe caſt you out.* Behold the pledges of my love, which I put into your hands: receive them, and caſt yourſelves upon me as your mediator and ſurety."

Upon an invitation ſo rich in love, with freedom and confidence receive the ſigns and ſeals. Let not unbelief keep you back; but conſider with yourſelves,—"Has Jeſus given himſelf unto the death for

ſhews that he is free and ſovereign in the diſtribution of his grace. But ſuch lifeleſs frames may often proceed from having our expectations raiſed too high; as if, by attending upon the Lord's Supper, you muſt always obtain ſome extraordinary manifeſtations of the love of God; or, like Paul, be *taken up into the third heaven*, and be admitted into the immediate preſence of God. It is true, in ſome few inſtances, the Lord makes ſuch diſcoveries: this, however, is not his ordinary way of dealing with his people; yet, when he is about to bring extraordinary trials upon them, or to lead them into dark and gloomy ways, or when he is about to remove them by death, he often gives them, in this ordinance, a pledge of his love: he comforts and animates their hearts by making them to eat of the *hidden manna*, and, by a prelibation, cauſes them to taſte of that rich entertainment which is *prepared in heaven for them*. But as this is not ordinarily to be expected, nor promiſed in the word of God, we are not to ſet our hearts too much upon it, nor too ardently pant after it; but leave it with the Lord to act the ſovereign's part. In this life we muſt *walk by faith, and not by ſight*; and to this we are called alſo in the ſacrament. It is faith which muſt then be exerciſed; and if communicants may only approach in faith, it is to draw nigh in a precious frame. It is beyond expreſſion great, if we are enabled to lay hold of that which is believed. For,

1. Is it not a great thing, if, when impreſſed with your poverty and periſhing condition, that you are enabled to come with humility before the moſt high God?

2. Is it not a great thing, that the Lord Jeſus has been made precious to your ſouls?—that you can

let thy bleſſing and thy peace reſt upon me, and thy grace abide with me. I cannot, whilſt I am in the wilderneſs of this world, always ſit at thy table; but ſtill my ſoul cleaves to thee. Let then thy *right hand uphold me.*"

2. We muſt pour out our ſouls to God, in GRATITUDE, and lie low in the duſt before him. Contemplating the greatneſs of his love, in admitting creatures ſo unworthy to a ſeat at his table, that there we may enjoy fellowſhip with God, with the ſpirits of the juſt before his throne, and with all the ſaints on earth, it becomes us, deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of our miſerable condition by nature, to ſay, "Lord! *what ſhall we render unto thee* for all thy benefits? What returns of gratitude ſhall we make to thee? We will love thee, O Lord, *our ſtrength* and our Redeemer. From henceforth ſhall the *love of God in Chriſt conſtrain us to judge, that as one died for all, it becomes us all, being dead, to live, not to ourſelves, but to him that died for us.* From this time forth, we will, in the ſtrength of the Lord, make our *members inſtruments of righteouſneſs to the glory of God. We have ſworn, and we will make it good, that we will keep thy righteous ſtatutes.*"

3. We muſt aſk ourſelves,—Whether the Lord hath refreſhed our ſouls, and ſatisfied them with his loving kindneſs? and whether, at his table, we have taſted of the ſpiritual meat and drink with which he feeds his people? We muſt, in like manner, be determined to go through the wilderneſs of this world in the ſtrength of this food; that thus it may be manifeſt, that of a truth the ordinance of the Supper adminiſters nouriſhment to the ſouls of his people.

4. Haſt thou been at the table? RETURN to thy

whilſt yet alone we muſt make a freſh ſurrender of ourſelves to him.

3. When we mingle with the family, we muſt be watchful that their promiſcuous converſation may not divert our minds from the ſolemn tranſactions of the day; that we do not perplex ourſelves with unneceſſary buſineſs, or converſe upon unſuitable ſubjects; but, on the contrary, that we endeavour to encourage each other to cleave to the Lord, and jointly bow before him in prayer and ſupplication.

What line of conduct ought to be purſued in the remaining parts of the day and afterwards, will be the ſubject of another lecture. What has been ſaid, we conſidered to be of great uſe, and of the higheſt moment.

We muſt now add a word by way of APPLICATION, with a view to the conviction of thoſe who are yet in an unconverted ſtate, and to the encouragement of the people of God.

1. We have a word to careleſs ſinners, who ſtill are in a ſtate of nature. Perſons of this deſcription, upon hearing what has been advanced, may be ready to ſay, "How burdenſome a taſk it is to attend upon ſuch an ordinance! Does it require the obſervance of all that has been preſcribed? if ſo, the ſervice of God is a hard ſervice: who can bear it? Certainly ſo much is not neceſſary, or we are unworthy communicants; for we have never been thus exerciſed."

Unhappy ſouls! do you account this ſervice a burden? this is a certain evidence, that you have never yet experienced the ſatisfaction which reſults from the ſervice of God. His people delight in nothing more than in duty; and to attend upon ordinances, affords them real joy. In the exerciſe of faith they long for the return of a ſacramental day, as the

they are uſing them, the refreſhing gales of the divine Spirit cheriſhes their faith, their love, and every gracious affection.

DELUDED MEN! who have ſo frequently gone to the Lord's table, and never yet in a right manner!—lay it to heart, and conſider, that if ſo much be requiſite in order to approach acceptably to God, and if *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himſelf*, what reaſon you have to aſk yourſelves, "What is our ſtanding, who are ſo lifeleſs and unconcerned? who have never retired alone, and bowed the knee before God, or at beſt have only repeated a haſty form of prayer, but are ſtrangers to the ſpirit of prayer; who approach the ſacrament without conſideration, with hearts filled with ſin and vanity; who, being at the table, ſuffer our eyes to rove abroad, but never once meditate on God, or on that Jeſus, whoſe death is ſhewn forth in the external ſigns."

If you had ſuch views of yourſelves, you would ſoon ſee, that your approaches are only from cuſtom or faſhion,—that you have not on the wedding garment. How deplorable is your caſe! Have you not to expect, that when the king comes in to ſee the gueſts, he will ſay to you, *Friends, how came ye in hither, not having on the wedding garment? Bind them hand and foot, and caſt them into outer darkneſs, where there is weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.*

O that the Lord would, on this ſide of eternity, impreſs theſe thoughts upon your hearts, and convince you of your ſinful conduct towards him, and cauſe you to confeſs it with ſhame and confuſion of face. Seek redemption in the blood of Jeſus, and beware of approaching again in ſo careleſs and unconcerned a manner. The time of admi-

is willing to be ſaved by Chriſt, in that way which the goſpel points out: but, becauſe he would rather live in ſin than be delivered from it, he practically declares, that he will not accept of Jeſus on goſpel terms. But this is not the caſe with thee, afflicted ſoul! thou wilt not dare to make the aſſertion; but, on the contrary, canſt thou not call upon God to witneſs, and ſay, "Thou, Lord, knoweſt what a burden my ſins are to me,—how much inward pain they give me,—how I have to wreſtle againſt them. Thou art alſo witneſs to the tears I ſhed in ſecret on account of them. How often, Lord, am I compelled to cry, *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* Thou knoweſt how willingly I would be freed from it,—how often I call on Jeſus as my king, to deſtroy its power in me." Well now, canſt thou in ſincerity do all this? I muſt declare to thee, that thou haſt no ground to be diſcouraged. Only look unto Jeſus;—fall down at his feet, and declare to him, that thou, though miſerable in thyſelf, art willing to be ſaved by him. Thou art not a greater ſinner than the prodigal ſon, who left his father's houſe, and *ſpent his ſubſtance in riotous living;* and who, when he came to himſelf, reſolved and ſaid, *I will ariſe and go to my father, and confeſs my ſin before him,* and met with a gracious reception. The father had, indeed, reaſon to caſt him off; but yet he runs to meet him, and with paternal tenderneſs embraces him, receives him again, and admits him to a ſeat at his table. O afflicted child of God! the Lord hath ſpoken this parable for thy encouragement, to manifeſt the greatneſs of his love,—to repreſent to thee, that he will not reject the greateſt of ſinners, and to declare that he calls thee, ſaying, "Whoever thou art,—though thou mayeſt be ever

is ſo, in like manner, in his love; and can that which ſuch a God diſplays be any thing leſs than great and inconceivable? In the view of it we are conſtrained to exclaim, *O how great is thy goodneſs, which is laid up for them that fear thee!* and, *As high as heaven is above the earth, ſo great is his goodneſs towards them that fear him.* The contemplation of it will, throughout eternity, be matter of aſtoniſhment and gratitude; but certainly it ought not to leſſen thy confidence.

But there are others of God's children, who will ſay, "We ſcarcely know what to do. We dare not venture to approach the ordinance: we feel ourſelves ſo unprepared for it, and yet dare not ſtay away; becauſe, in ſuch caſe, we would ſin againſt the divine command. When we conſider the ſtate of our minds, we find them ſo lifeleſs and inſenſible, that we are totally devoid of any exerciſes of grace. How then can ſuch preſume to approach the table of the Lord?"

I reply, that this is indeed cauſe of ſhame and lamentation: but, perplexed Chriſtian, pauſe a while; be not too haſty in forming a concluſion againſt thyſelf. Doſt thou complain to man only? or is it a ſubject of lamentation with thee before thy God? Art thou ſatisfied with living thus? Is it not thy grief, that thy zeal, thy ardour and activity, are ſo weak? Would it not produce real joy in thy heart, if thy ſoul were exerciſed in a more lively manner? Canſt thou anſwer theſe queſtions in the affirmative, and ſay, "Yes, the Lord knoweth how much I have been diſtreſſed becauſe of my barrenneſs?" thou mayeſt not ſtay from the table to which thou art invited: this would be like the ſick man that would refuſe the aſſiſtance of a phyſician to remove his diſorder. Whither wilt thou go? Is there any

THE

PIOUS COMMUNICANT.

Lecture XIV.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD AFTER A COMMUNION SABBATH.

IN the two preceding lectures, we have ſpoken at large on the great ſubjects of preparation for an acceptable and profitable approach to the table of the Lord, and of the deportment of the people of God, on a communion ſabbath. We ſhall, in the preſent lecture, enquire, how they ought to conduct themſelves, after an occaſion ſo ſolemn;—or, in other words, what duties a Chriſtian muſt engage in, that his ſoul may be benefited by the ordinance.

In doing this, we propoſe to obſerve the following method:

1. To ſhew that believers are under the ſtrongeſt obligations of expreſſing their gratitude to God, by a holy walk.

2. To point out the duties which they are under obligation to perform, after having been permitted to occupy their ſeats at the table of the Lord.

3. To attempt an anſwer to ſuch queſtions as weak believers may propoſe, relative to certain

As we have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo we muſt alſo walk in him, Col. ii. 6. Hence this ordinance is emphatically ſtyled a *bleſſing* or *thankſgiving*. See 1 Cor. x. 16.

3. The ſame thing was repreſented in the ancient ſacrament of the paſſover, in the room of which the Lord's Supper was inſtituted. In that ordinance, the goodneſs of God, manifeſted to Iſrael in graciouſly delivering them from the deſtroying angel which ſlew all the firſt-born in the houſes of the Egyptians, muſt be remembered and acknowledged, agreeably to the command of Moſes, Exod. xii. 27. Beſides, there was a cup of bleſſing, which was diſtributed by the fathers of their families, which cuſtom the Lord Chriſt appears to have alſo adopted, and the whole ſolemnity was cloſed with a ſong of praiſe;—which hymn Chriſt alſo ſung with his diſciples, after he had adminiſtered the Supper to them. All this was with a view to teach us, that after the uſe of the ſacrament, in which ſpiritual benefits are brought into remembrance, we are alſo bound to give glory unto God. Hence has ariſen the practice which obtains in our churches, that as ſoon as the ordinance is adminiſtered, the ſolemnity is cloſed by the miniſter, who pronounces the words of the 103d Pſalm, 1ſt to 13th verſe.—*Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diſeaſes, who redeemeth thy life from deſtruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindneſs and tender mercies.* Hence too has ariſen the practice of delivering thankſgiving ſermons, in which the congregation are excited to engage in duty, and to the exerciſe of gratitude.

4. We may alſo add all thoſe paſſages of Scripture, which admoniſh us to praiſe, to exalt, and to

SECONDLY, To enquire what duties are particularly incumbent upon them.

Firſt, There are duties to be diſcharged upon the ſacramental ſabbath itſelf. It is proper for Chriſtians to attend the public ſervice in the after-parts of that day, that with the aſſembly of the ſaints they may expreſs their gratitude to the Lord, praiſe his name, and be taught the duties which devolve upon them, in conſequence of that renewed inſtance of the favour of the Moſt High conferred upon them. Upon leaving the houſe of God, they ſhould endeavour to keep their hearts in a calm and compoſed frame, as much as poſſible to avoid all kinds of company and converſation which will not tend to edification, and to retire in ſecret, with prayer and thankſgiving. Thus did pious David: when God made to him ſuch precious promiſes relative to the eſtabliſhment of his houſe and kingdom, he did not wait long, but as ſoon as Nathan had withdrawn, before any thing intervened, whilſt his heart was ſo much affected and taken up with thoſe promiſed bleſſings, he goes into the preſence of the Lord, and in the fulneſs of his heart he exclaims in theſe words: *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto?*—As if he had ſaid, "Lord, I am filled with aſtoniſhment! Thou ſurroundeſt me with ſo many inſtances of thy goodneſs, that I cannot find words to expreſs my holy ſatisfaction. Wilt thou do ſo much to ſuch a worm of the duſt? *Is this the manner of man, O Lord God? The word that thou haſt ſpoken concerning thy ſervant, eſtabliſh for ever, and do as thou haſt ſaid,*" 2 Sam. vii. 18, 27.

O beloved! thus muſt we alſo do. Like David we muſt, in faith and affection, commune with God,

to be performed on a ſacramental ſabbath. We therefore, SECONDLY, obſerve, that communicants muſt alſo endeavour, through grace, to attend to the following things.

1. To PRESERVE a tranquil, even, and tender frame; which evidences itſelf,—

a. In regard to GOD, in a *firm purpoſe of heart to cleave to him*, to hold him faſt, and to follow him as a wife her huſband, a child its father, a diſciple his teacher, a ſervant his maſter. This is called in the word of God, *to walk before the Lord*, and *to be perfect*, Gen. xvii. 1. This is *to walk with God* as Noah and Enoch did, Gen. v. 24, and vi. 2. This is *to cleave to the Lord, as a girdle to the loins of a man*, Jer. xiii. 4. Thus muſt communicants follow the Lord, by obeying his precepts, and by cordially ſubmitting to all thoſe diſpenſations, whether of providence or of grace, ſaying, *Speak, Lord, for thy ſervant heareth.*

b. This calm and ſubmiſſive frame, communicants muſt ſhew forth in the ſpiritual conteſt; for the Chriſtian muſt again enter the liſts, and contend with his enemies, who are always armed for the combat. If the warrior ſhall valiantly engage his enemy, he muſt not be too ſoon diſcouraged and alarmed; for in ſuch caſe he is not in a ſituation manfully to reſiſt, and is in danger of being overcome. So muſt the Chriſtian, who is a ſpiritual ſoldier, whoſe buſineſs it is to fight when the trumpet of war is ſounded, go forth with a compoſed mind, in the ſtrength of the Lord God; knowing that the great Captain of his ſalvation ſtands in front, animates and encourages him, ſaying, *Fear not; I am with you.* But the Chriſtian ſoldier muſt not be ſo much at eaſe, nor ſo confident, as to be inactive when his enemies lie

But, in this, we ought not to be too forward in mentioning our own experiences, which might produce the ill effect of cheriſhing in us a ſecret pride of being eſteemed great Chriſtians. Communications of this ſort ought ordinarily to be made only in the preſence of a few confidential friends: yet, as they may tend to the encouragement of our fellow men, we may make them occaſionally when a good opportunity offers, even before the world, with a view of letting them ſee how delightful the ſervice of the Lord is, and with a deſign of creating in their hearts a love to it.

But, above all, we muſt expreſs our gratitude IN ACTIONS or by deeds; glorifying God by a holy walk, and evidencing that it is our deſire *to mortify the members which are on earth*, that thus it may appear, that we are dead to the world, and riſen with Chriſt. His love muſt conſtrain us, *becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live ſhall not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him that died for them and roſe again.*

3. To a becoming conduct after the ſacrament, appertains a frequent and proper exerciſe of ſoul, with reſpect to THE COVENANT into which we have entered with God; and that on this wiſe:

a. Contemplate frequently the PRECIOUSNESS of the covenant, the ſigns of which you have been uſing. Conſider it as to its greatneſs, extent, and eternity. Call to mind its promiſes, and the faithfulneſs of God, who will certainly make them all good. This will ſerve as a ſupport to your faith—This David endeavoured to do; ſee 2 Sam. xxxii. 5, *Although my houſe be not ſo with God, nevertheleſs he hath made with me an everlaſting covenant, which is well ordered in*

love, which he hath manifeſted towards ſinners, by giving himſelf up unto the death for them, as their Surety, High Prieſt, and Brother. This may lead us continually to enquire, whether our hearts are inflamed with love to Jeſus, whoſe love burns in ſuch a degree towards us. Yes, we muſt make uſe of him in all theſe relations, make them our plea, and ſay; "Deareſt Saviour, haſt thou given thyſelf over unto the death for me?—let me then experience the efficacy of thy blood for ſanctification. Enter for me into the preſence of thy Father: bear me upon thy heart. I know that the Father loveth me, but the contemplation of thy interceſſion affords me ſtrong conſolation. Thou art the merciful and faithful High Prieſt,—yes, the Almighty King. Break thou then in my ſoul *the power of ſin.*"

Further, we muſt conſider God the HOLY GHOST as our *Teacher*, *Leader*, *Comforter*, *Seal*, and *Earneſt*. We muſt look much unto him, to conduct us in the way of life, and ſay—"Was it not thou who firſt cauſedſt my heart to be willing to enter within the bonds of the covenant? Was it not thou who brought me to Jeſus, and united me to him? May I not then expect, that thou wilt lead, preſerve, and ſanctify me ſtill more and more?—that thou wilt ſhew me the way in which I am ſtill to go?—that in darkneſs thou wilt be my light, in ſorrow my comforter, and in diſtreſs my counſellor?—that thou wilt write the law of God on my heart, and make me to walk in thy ſtatutes?"

c. We muſt often recollect, that on our ſide we have both ſaid and ſworn, that we would be the Lord's, that we would live for him, and walk before him,—that we have obligated ourſelves to this in the moſt ſolemn manner. In virtue of our having thus

neceſſary for me; and I have ſaid *Amen* to them. I have laid my hand upon them, and approached thy table. Now then, Lord, let it be according to thy word. Thou art Jehovah, the unchangeable God, who will not break the word thou haſt ſpoken, but fulfil the ſame, and make it *yea* and *amen*, to thy glory. Thou haſt confirmed it with an oath, as Elohim, the covenant God; wilt thou not give me all needful grace? Lord, *do it for thy name's ſake.*"

e. The covenant into which we have ſolemnly entered, and which we have ratified at the table, we muſt CONSTANTLY RENEW, and thus ſhew that we do not repent what we have done, but that, as we have ſworn, ſo will we keep the righteous ſtatutes of the Lord. We ought, upon every occaſion, to engage in the act of renewing our covenant. We are not to think that it is enough that we do it when the ordinance is adminiſtered to us—No; it muſt be done daily. In every prayer we ſhould give ourſelves to the Lord. This will be found an excellent mean of promoting a tender and holy walk,—of awakening us, and of keeping us on the Lord's ſide, however it may fare with us, whether proſperity or adverſity be our lot.

4. But in order to a becoming conduct after the ſacrament, it is neceſſary that we be careful to follow the internal ſuggeſtions of the Holy Spirit. We muſt by no means grieve, oppoſe, or quench the Spirit, *by which we are ſealed to the day of redemption.* When he awakens us to a ſenſe of duty,—excites us to engage in ſecret prayer, and in converſe with God,—or when he warns us againſt ſin, and occaſions of it,—or when he counſels us in times of darkneſs,—we muſt not act contrary to his holy admonitions, which

and he is the propitiation for our ſins: and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world.

c. Under the deepeſt impreſſion of ſin, we may, from a conſideration of our covenant relation to God, reaſon in this manner: "If ſin did not exiſt in us, there could be no covenant of grace: but the God of the covenant hath ſaid, *Ye, my ſheep, the ſheep of my paſture, are men*,—weak and ſinful men.. I knew well that you would act an unfaithful part towards me before I took you into my covenant: but *I am the Lord your God*, your faithful, your unchangeable God: I will therefore never withdraw my affection from you. I have appointed a Mediator of this covenant, whoſe BLOOD *cleanſeth from all ſin.* This will I apply to you, upon your application by faith to him, and, with all your ſins, caſt yourſelves at his feet.

6. To promote a pious conduct after communion, it is neceſſary that we HABITUALLY EXAMINE OUR CONSCIENCE, and ſeriouſly call ourſelves to an account in the preſence of God.—"Lord, what is my true ſtate? what the real exerciſes of my heart? How have I conducted myſelf this day? Have I been faithful to my God, and to myſelf? Have my views been pure? Have I aimed at the glory of God? Alas! I do not converſe frequently enough with my own heart: I am too great a ſtranger to myſelf; and even though I enter upon an examination of my ſoul, I paſs it lightly over: and hence it is, that I become ſo much eſtranged from my God, and that I find ſo much difficulty in preparing for this holy ordinance."

7. We muſt BE CAREFUL TO KEEP OURSELVES in the LOVE OF GOD, and of the BRETHREN. This is the exhortation of Jude, ver. 21,—*Belov-*

ſanctuary. This would be an evidence that your hearts were fixed, and that it was your chief deſire to enjoy the favour of God, and intimate communion with him.

Theſe are the ſeveral parts of our conduct after a communion ſabbath, which we thought neceſſary to mention. We now proceed to the THIRD thing propoſed, which was, to anſwer ſuch queſtions as weak believers may propoſe, relative to certain points contained in this and in the two preceding lectures.

Firſt, Perhaps ONE may ſay, "I *am* convinced that I ought thus to be prepared for an approach to the table of the Lord, and thus to deport myſelf: but I know very little by experience, and therefore I cannot diſcharge thoſe duties in the manner which has been recommended." To this we reply,—

1. This muſt be matter of ſhame and humiliation to you. You muſt, on this account, lie low before God; for you have abundant means of inſtruction and admonition, but you do not attend to them: you ſeem to be oppoſed to them, and yield too much to the gratification of the fleſh.

2. Enquire whence this ariſes. Is it not from a careleſs, irregular, and worldly walk and converſation? There are, perhaps, ſecret ſins, with which you are yet unacquainted: or, if they have been diſcovered to you, you have not been enough on your guard againſt them, and have too readily yielded to the force of temptation.

3. You do not frequently enough retire from the world, and go to God in ſecret, in order to examine your hearts; and, from a conſciouſneſs of your untender deportment, you are afraid thus to engage in this work. But were you only to begin in faithfulneſs, and were you to ſuffer your hearts to ſpeak,

with which you have been hitherto unacquainted. If this be the caſe, lay down your books;—go with your diſcovery to God;—thank him for it:—earneſtly pray, that the inſtruction which you have received may tend to your conviction, and that your knowledge may be more promoted. Or, is your heart awakened and affected?—improve the moment;—bring your hearts, thus moved, before the Lord;—ſincerely make a ſurrender of them to him; but by no means let ſuch an opportunity ſlip: who can tell how much you may profit by it,—what aſſiſtance from above you might receive. But you are not ſufficiently attentive when you read: you paſs over truths in a light and curſory manner; and if you do not immediately find any thing applicable to your caſe, you diſcontinue the enquiry.

Secondly, ANOTHER probably will ſay, "I have, agreeably to the qualifications which I poſſeſſed, and the deſire which God gave me, been ſeeking to prepare myſelf. I have made a ſurrender of myſelf unto God. I have alſo approached his table. But it has not pleaſed the Lord to meet with me: I was barren and dry when I went and when I returned from that ordinance. And yet the Lord knows how much my ſoul wiſhed it had been otherwiſe. How muſt I, in this caſe, CONDUCT myſelf after a communion?"

1. ACKNOWLEDGE, with reverence, the ſovereignty of God in the diſpenſation of his favours. He imparts them at ſuch times, and in ſuch meaſures, as pleaſes him:—and when you entered into covenant with him, you made no ſtipulation in what ways he ſhould lead you,—whether in light or in darkneſs; you gave that over into the hands of Jehovah. Continue to act upon the ſame principle,—

you to teach you to prize his preſence more: ſo that, when he ſhall afford you his divine conſolations, you may be the better prepared for the reception of them, and more on your guard againſt whatever may cauſe God to conceal from you the light of his countenance; for it is found in experience, that he kindly viſits thoſe who continue thus ſeeking, thus deſiring, hungering, thirſting, and looking for him. Set, then, no limits to the Spirit of the Lord, but quietly wait upon him.

Thirdly, Others may ſay, "We have been told, that our conduct after ſacrament ſhould conſiſt in the exerciſe of real gratitude for the good we have enjoyed. That is indeed proper for thoſe who have experienced ſome good: but as for us, we have much more reaſon of complaining than of praiſing. In what ſhall we be thankful?" Well, friends, is there no reaſon for the exerciſe of gratitude? Will you then deſpiſe the day of ſmall things? Is not the ſmalleſt degree of grace great grace, and thus deſerving of your gratitude?

1. Is it not great grace, that you can teſtify before the Lord, that on your part you have ſought to act ſincerely and faithfully?—that you can ſay, Lord, thou art our witneſs, that thou wert and now art our deſire?

2. Is it not great grace, that you have ſuch a ſenſe of your unworthineſs and emptineſs in the ſight of God, that, like the Canaanitiſh woman, you may lie at Jeſus' feet, waiting for the crumbs of his grace? To be little in our own eyes,—to be humble and lowly of heart, eſpecially before, at, and after receiving the ſacrament, is pleaſing to God. We are then in a ſuitable frame, when with the centurion we can ſay, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou ſhouldſt come*

that, ſhould you in ſuch circumſtances approach, you would *eat and drink judgment to yourſelves.*

But this temptation you muſt endeavour to remove. Are you enabled in your preparations to exerciſe a faith which only makes you cleave to the Lord? approach,—you have a warrant for it.

2. It may be, that the Lord himſelf, for wiſe and holy reaſons, thus deals with you. Satan does it to perplex and haraſs you; but the Lord does it to make you humble and little in your own eyes, to create in your hearts a holy fear and jealouſy of yourſelves.

3. Beſides, the fear of man, or ſome other cauſe, may excite a perturbation which you cannot eaſily account for. By this means the mind is diſcompoſed and unfitted to engage in this ſolemn buſineſs. But we muſt ſeek on rational grounds to riſe ſuperior to theſe unreaſonable fears, that the heart be not hindered and prevented from being properly exerciſed.

Fifthly, and laſtly, Perhaps ſome of the children of God may ſay, "Alas! we are ſo often, even after communion, hurried again into ſin, that we loſe every advantage which we might have expected from that ordinance. What ſhall we do in ſuch a caſe?"

Firſt, I muſt anſwer, IN GENERAL, what I have often remarked, that the enemy is never more engaged in tempting us to ſin, than before or after we have been at the table of the Lord. This he alſo does, when we have experienced any refreſhings from the Lord, to the end that he may take away the ſweets and comforts of the life of grace. Thus he has tempted many of the ſaints of the Moſt High. When king Hezekiah had done much for God, had wrought a great reformation in Iſrael, and could ſay,

2. Examine your hearts before the Lord, and ſee how they are exerciſed in reſpect to ſin. If you fall into it, is it a pleaſure, or is it a cauſe of diſſatisfaction to you? are you indifferent about it? are you unaffected with it? do you knowingly and willingly commit it?—then is your caſe alarming. But can you, on the contrary, ſay, "The Lord knows how much I ſtruggle againſt it,—what bitterneſs it creates,—how I am oppoſed to it,—how it deſtroys my peace?"—all this evidences that you have declared ſin to be your enemy; for a natural man ſins, and comforts himſelf with the grace of God and the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and goes on careleſsly as before. O that I could imprint on your minds this diſtinction between the ſins of the world and thoſe of the people of God! that thus the former might be brought to ſee themſelves, and that the latter might be encouraged and comforted. For the grace of God, and the blood of Jeſus, is indeed for ſinners,—yea, for great ſinners; but not for thoſe who delight in ſinning.

3. Do you find, that you are thus affected in reſpect to ſin? what will you then do? Will you continue in this ſtate, deſtitute of confidence in God, yield yourſelves up to deſpondency, and ſay, "Now all the fruit of my attendance on the ordinance is gone?" No.—What courſe will you then take? The ſafeſt way is, to flee with ſpeed to the throne of grace, before the breach between the Lord and your ſouls becomes wider. There with ſhame confeſs your guilt; that you have indeed again fallen into ſin, but it was againſt your wills, and that you would not wilfully break your covenant with God. Oh! we muſt ariſe and go to our Father, and ſay, "We have ſinned, but receive us again in

they come into the preſence of a holy God, but it is with hearts unſanctified and unclean. O ſinners, are you not afraid thus to appear before the Eternal's throne? Would you dare to ſit down at the table of an earthly prince, with garments ſpotted and unclean? and will you preſume to preſent yourſelves before the Lord of heaven and earth with unhallowed hearts? Will you reach out your defiled hands, and take the holy ſigns of the covenant?—What may you not expect in return for ſuch conduct? Will not God addreſs you in theſe awful words: *What haſt thou to do, that thou ſhouldſt take my covenant in thy mouth? I will reprove thee, and ſet thy ſin in order before thine eyes.*

Others, ON THE DAY OF COMMUNION, conceive that they have approached the ſacred feaſt in a becoming manner, if their minds have been in ſome degree compoſed, if they have devoted the whole day to the ſervice of God, and avoided thoſe ſins into which they have been accuſtomed to fall. But, O ſinners! in faithfulneſs we muſt declare to you, that Jehovah *hates and deſpiſes your feaſt-days, and will not ſmell in your ſolemn aſſemblies*, Amos v. 21. Can it be poſſible that the Eternal ſhould do otherwiſe, whilſt your hearts, though at eaſe in their ſins, are ſo contaminated and impure?—certainly he cannot. When the King ſhall enter to ſurvey the gueſts who are ſeated at his table, he will ſay, *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment? Take him away, and caſt him into utter darkneſs, where there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* And he was ſpeechleſs.

If before and upon a communion ſabbath, many reſt on thoſe qualifications which can never recommend them to God as worthy communicants, multi-

proach without any ſuitable impreſſion, with unconcern and indifference, is to approach without profit, and to eat the children's bread without any covenant right to it.

But a word, before we cloſe, muſt be addreſſed to the people of God. For if natural men are ſtrangers to the life of true godlineſs,—if they know not the things of the Spirit of God,—they are ignorant of thoſe important matters which have been preſented to view in this and in the preceding lectures. But, believers, they are ſubjects familiar to you. Suffer us then to ſpeak to you with plainneſs, and to expreſs, in a faithful manner, the cenſure which ſome parts of your conduct merit.

Many of you are much engaged in ſeeking to have your hearts prepared to meet with God in the ſacrament, and to be in a good frame on a communion ſabbath; but ah! what little concern do you teſtify afterwards to glorify God! You have been at the table, and it ſeems as if you thought nothing more was required of you. You return to your buſineſs; you ſuffer the cares of the world gradually to ſteal away your hearts from God. You do not daily aſk yourſelves—" O my ſoul! knoweſt thou what thou haſt been doing? Why haſt thou ſo ſolemnly obligated thyſelf to the Lord to love and ſerve him? Do all parts of thy conduct correſpond with thine engagements, and with the reſolutions which thou haſt formed to live before God?" Were you often thus to enquire into the agreement between your covenant vows, and the regard you pay to them after they are made, it might render you more careful to ſeek to live to him who died for you.—And the nearer you live to Jeſus, the greater will be the advantage which

in his faithfulneſs; but guilt lieth at your door. May not the little progreſs you have made proceed in ſome meaſure from theſe ſources, that after you have been at the ordinance you have forgotten your vows, or acted a part incompatible with them; that you have not quitted yourſelves like men, when aſſaulted by the enemy;—that you have ſuffered to fall from your hands your ſpiritual weapons, and ſhunned the conflict, notwithſtanding the moſt poſitive aſſurances that the Captain of your ſalvation will ſtand in the front of the battle, and himſelf fight your battles; that you do not daily ſearch and ſcrutinize your hearts, to ſee how their exerciſes and diſpoſitions comport with what God hath done for you; that you are ungrateful to God for his benefits to you, through your unbelief, forgetting that unthankfulneſs is a ſin of the deepeſt dye, and that the ſmalleſt degrees of grace lay you under eternal obligations to take the cup of ſalvation, and to call upon the name of the Lord; that you do not maintain a lively ſenſe of the near relation in which you ſtand to God as your covenant God, by a daily renewal of your covenant with him. Hence, the love of God, which once burned high, becomes a languid flame, and that affection which ought to be maintained for the brethren often cools, which never fails to diſturb the ſoul, and to deſtroy its confidence: that you do not watch with a becoming care againſt ſin, and ſuffer often the objects of ſenſe and vanity to draw your affections off from God: that there are ſins which are to you as a right eye, with which you cannot part, for which you plead, ſaying, "They are infirmities natural to us, which we cannot eaſily forſake," as if on that account they rendered you leſs guilty in the ſight of God. Know it, children of

of his diſpleaſure, Iſai. xxxix. *God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. He will turn his hands upon the little ones.* If, beloved, we did but ſee our ſinfulneſs and pollution, we would be humbled as worms in the duſt before God. When pride ſwells the human heart, it is an evidence that it goes ill with the Chriſtian: for when the believer proſpers in the divine life, when he increaſes in grace, he is then little in his own eyes. No man ever made greater advances in the divine life, than Paul; and yet he calls himſelf *the chief of ſinners, the leaſt of the apoſtles;* and declares, that all what he was, *he was by the grace of God.* If we poſſeſſed grace, even in a higher degree than Paul, ſtill there would be abundant reaſon to be humbled, and to walk lowly before God.

See thus, why it is, that from one ſacramental occaſion to another you are deprived of the pleaſure which always ariſes from the exerciſe of confidence in God; why you are in doubts and fears with reſpect to your ſtate; why you enjoy not peace and joy in believing.

Believers, again we have pointed out to you the path of duty. Praiſe your God, that once more you are called to wait upon him in this holy ſacrament, and that another opportunity is offering of returning to the Lord, of confeſſing before him your ſins, of renewing your covenant, and of taking Jehovah again for your God. So unſpeakably great is his loving kindneſs, that he will not forſake you, though you have proved to be unfaithful to him. He invites you to enter within the bonds of the covenant—Go then to the table, with humility indeed, but yet with Chriſtian boldneſs—Go, occupy your ſeats there, as if it were the laſt opportunity that will

APPENDIX.

THE FORM FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

BELOVED in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, attend to the words of the inſtitution of the holy Supper of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as they are delivered by the holy Apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 23—30.

For I have received of the Lord, that which alſo I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. And after the ſame manner alſo, he took the cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This cup is the new teſtament in my blood, this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me; for as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come: wherefore, whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, ſhall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf, not diſcerning the Lord's body.

That we may now celebrate the Supper of the Lord to our comfort, it is above all things neceſſary,

Firſt, Rightly to examine ourſelves.

Secondly, To direct it to that end, for which Chriſt hath ordained and inſtituted the ſame, namely, to his remembrance.

perſons, and thoſe who live in hatred and envy againſt their neighbours; all adulterers, whoremongers, drunkards, thieves, uſurers, robbers, gameſters, covetous, and all who lead offenſive lives.

All theſe, while they continue in ſuch ſins, ſhall abſtain from this meat, (which Chriſt hath ordained only for the faithful) leſt their judgment and condemnation be made the heavier. But this is not deſigned (dearly beloved brethren and ſiſters in the Lord) to deject the contrite hearts of the faithful, as if none might come to the Supper of the Lord, but thoſe who are without ſin; for we do not come to this Supper, to teſtify thereby that we are perfect and righteous in ourſelves; but on the contrary, conſidering that we ſeek our life out of ourſelves in Jeſus Chriſt, we acknowledge that we lie in the midſt of death: therefore, notwithſtanding we feel many infirmities and miſeries in ourſelves, as namely, that we have not perfect faith, and that we do not give ourſelves to ſerve God with that zeal as we are bound, but have daily to ſtrive with the weakneſs of our faith, and the evil luſts of our fleſh; yet, ſince we are (by the grace of the Holy Ghoſt) ſorry for theſe weakneſſes, and earneſtly deſirous to fight againſt our unbelief, and to live according to all the commandments of God: therefore we reſt aſſured that no ſin or infirmity, which ſtill remaineth againſt our will, in us, can hinder us from being received of God in mercy, and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly meat and drink.

Let us now *alſo* conſider, to what end the Lord hath inſtituted his Supper, namely, that we do it in remembrance of him: Now after this manner are we to remember him by it.

Firſt, That we are confidently perſuaded in our hearts, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, (according to the promiſes made to our forefathers in the old teſtament) was ſent of the Father into the world: that he aſſumed our fleſh and blood: that he bore for us the wrath of God, (under which we ſhould have periſhed everlaſtingly) from the beginning of his incarnation to the end of his life upon earth, and that he hath fulfilled for us all obedience to the divine law, and righteouſneſs; eſpecially when the weight of our ſins and the wrath of God preſſed out of him the bloody

drink of life eternal. For by his death he hath taken away the cauſe of our eternal death and miſery, namely, ſin; and obtained for us the quickening ſpirit, that we by the ſame (which dwelleth in Chriſt as in the head, and in us as his members) might have true communion with him, and be made partakers of all his bleſſings, of life eternal, righteouſneſs and glory.

Beſides, that we by the ſame ſpirit may alſo be united as members of one body in true brotherly love, as the holy Apoſtle ſaith, *For we being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.* For as out of many grains one meal is ground, and one bread baked, and out of many berries being preſſed together, one wine floweth, and mixeth itſelf together; ſo ſhall we all, who by a true faith are ingrafted into Chriſt, be altogether one body, through brotherly love, for Chriſt's ſake, our beloved Saviour, who hath ſo exceedingly loved us; and not only ſhew this in word, but alſo in very deed towards one another.

Hereto aſſiſt us, the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, through his holy Spirit, AMEN.

{That we may obtain all this, let us humble ourſelves before God, and with true faith implore his grace.}

O Moſt merciful God and Father, we beſeech thee, that thou wilt be pleaſed in this Supper (in which we celebrate the glorious remembrance of the bitter death of thy beloved Son Jeſus Chriſt) to work in our hearts through thy holy Spirit, that we may daily more and more with true confidence, give ourſelves up unto thy Son Jeſus Chriſt, that our afflicted and contrite hearts, through the power of the Holy Ghoſt, may be fed and comforted with his true body and blood; yea, with him true God and man, that only heavenly bread: and that we may no longer live in our ſins, but he in us, and we in him, and thus truly be made partakers of the new and everlaſting teſtament, and of the covenant of grace. That we may not doubt but thou wilt for ever be our gracious Father, never more imputing our ſins unto us, and providing us with all things neceſſary, as well for the body as the ſoul, as thy beloved children and heirs; grant us alſo thy grace, that we may

During the communion, there ſhall or may be devoutly ſung, a pſalm, or ſome chapter read, in remembrance of the death of Chriſt, as the 53d chap. of Iſaiah, the 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18, chapters of John, or the like.

After the COMMUNION, the Miniſter ſhall ſay,

Beloved in the Lord, ſince the Lord hath now fed our ſouls at his table, let us therefore jointly praiſe his holy name with thankſgiving, and every one ſay in his heart, thus:

Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul; and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name.

Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits.

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diſeaſes.

Who redeemeth thy life from deſtruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindneſs and tender mercies.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

He hath not dealt with us after our ſins, nor rewardeth us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, ſo great is his mercy towards them that fear him.

As far as the eaſt is from the weſt, ſo far hath he removed our tranſgreſſions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

Who hath not ſpared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and given us all things with him. Therefore God commendeth therewith his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us; much more then, being now juſtified by his blood, we ſhall be ſaved from wrath through him; for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his life. Therefore ſhall my mouth and heart ſhew forth the praiſe of the Lord from this time forth for evermore, AMEN.

TO THE

REV. DR. JOHN H. LIVINGSTON, S. S. T. P.

WITH WHOSE FRIENDSHIP AND AFFECTION I HAVE BEEN HONOURED,
NOT ONLY SINCE MY BEING CALLED TO THE OFFICE OF THE SACRED MINISTRY,
BUT FROM MY EARLIEST YOUTH;

TO THE

REV. JOHN B. JOHNSON,

LATE A BELOVED COLLEAGUE, WHOSE FAITHFULNESS, ON ALL OCCASIONS MANIFESTED,
HAS MADE AN IMPRESSION ON MY MIND WHICH CAN NEVER BE EFFACED;

TO THE

REVEREND SYNODS OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA;

AND TO

ALL WHO LOVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, IN SINCERITY AND TRUTH:

THE FOLLOWING TRANSLATION OF THE PRACTICAL WRITINGS OF THE LATE REV. PETRUS IMMENS,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED, BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

Albany, Oct. 25, 1802.

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